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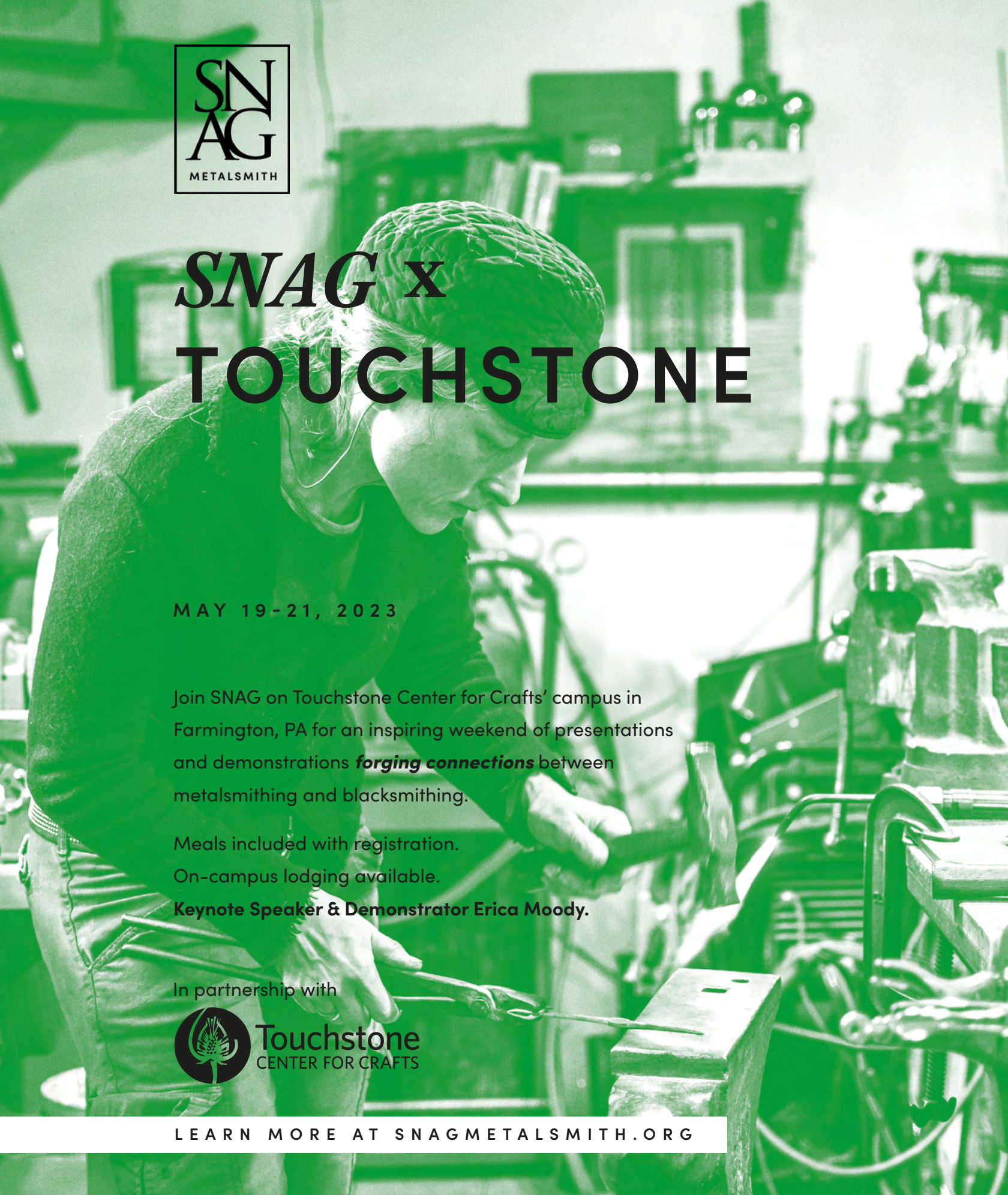

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Jalnar Dhanani
See page 26.

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ON THE COVER
Nanette Pengelley: *Conceal*, 2015. See page 32.

There are cycles to which all living things are bound. I'm not talking just about birth and death here. I think of artistic practices and the communities we build around them as "living things" that require tending. There are ebbs and flows to our creative practices, and constant shifts in the balance between individuals and our communities. This notion undergirds my approach to this publication generally, but it's also particularly resonant in this issue.

Space is held throughout the issue for the complexities and vulnerabilities of being human. There are delights herein, and there are griefs. These aren't clear dichotomies, but states that overlap and rub up against one another. It is in this spirit that we present "Voice & Vision," a new column for the intertwined practices of language and object-making. Jewelry and poems by Ariella Har-Even are our first foray.

Both Maya Kini's "Career Topographies" and D Wood's profile on Lanny Bergner contain notions of wayfinding through life's challenges, finding one's path as a maker, and confronting questions of starting anew after disruptions like illness, caretaking, and grief. In "Crit Group," Jillian Moore shares a highly personal account of what happens when big plans fail spectacularly. Funlola Coker makes a plea in "LOOK" for a metals community that includes more Black and Brown makers. An account of the *Plan B Art Project* by Katie Griffith highlights how the jewelry community has coalesced around the fight for bodily autonomy.

The heft of these topics is countered with joyful offerings: Jackie Andrews's celebration of queer storytelling, Rebekah Frank's account of Kelly Dzioba's colorful work, and Olivia Shih's profile on jeweler Jalnar Dhanani.

The process of writing this foreword came under the weight of grief tugging at my heart. This issue was set in motion well before the sad news of Sharon Church's death arrived to me via text on a bitterly cold day in late December. I have thought long and often about Sharon in the few months since she left this plane of existence. I've thought about her presence in my life as my teacher, as the person who introduced me to the world of art jewelry, setting me on the trajectory that eventually led to my role at this publication. I know she was proud of this fact, and that she was proud of me.

What strikes me now, in piecing together the themes of this issue, is that remembering Sharon—whose work captured the beauty and poetry of growth and decay, of life and death—feels right at home with the content offered here. ***—Adriane Dalton, Editor***

The mission of *Metalsmith* is to explore, analyze, promote, and document excellence and innovation in the field of jewelry and metalsmithing. In achieving this goal, SNAG will produce and oversee the direction and content of a publication that will serve as a significant resource for the metalsmithing field. The editorial content of *Metalsmith* will emphasize contemporary activities, makers, and ideas and incorporate supportive content, relevant critical issues, and the exchange of viewpoints.

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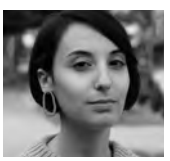
Contributors

Jackie Andrews is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, and arts administrator based in rural Maryland. They currently work as a grant writer and development professional for several artists and arts nonprofits across the United States. (@jackiegemcreative)

Funlola Coker is a metalsmith from Lagos, Nigeria. Funlola creates narrative sculptures that call on nostalgic memories and moments of the mundane that are held dear. Coker has taught at notable craft institutions such as Snow Farm: The New England Craft Program and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. Funlola's work has been exhibited at Brooklyn Metalworks, the Fuller Craft Museum, TONE Gallery in Memphis and the Metal Museum. Funlola holds an MFA in Metal from the State University of New York at New Paltz. (funlolacoker.com)

Rebekah Frank is a studio artist and independent writer who enjoys traveling the world in search of interesting experiences to fuel both her art and writing practices. (rebekahfrank.com)

Katie Griffith is an arts and culture reporter and jeweler in Cincinnati, Ohio. A passion for creative writing and art has yielded books of poetry, years of reporting, and a line of handmade jewelry. She is currently a jeweler's apprentice and very excited about her first encounter with platinum. She also enjoys rock climbing, soccer, and word searches.



Ariella Har-Even is a jeweler and metalsmith in Cleveland, Ohio. She received her BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and is the recipient of a First Juror's Award (Enamel Guild North East) and a One for the Future award (NYC Jewelry Week). Her work has been exhibited in the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery, and more. She is the cofounder of Commence Jewelry, an educational initiative that supports emerging artists in the metalsmithing field. (ariellahar-even.com)

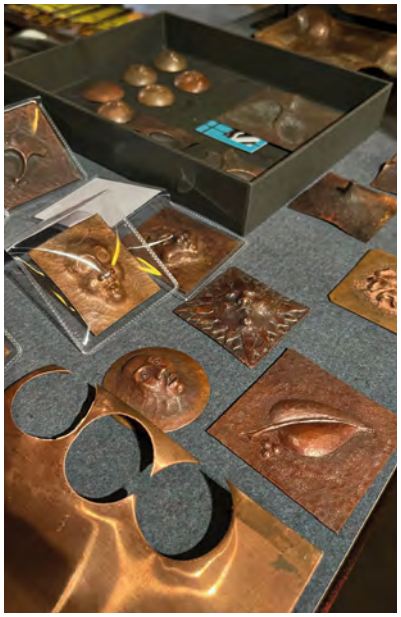
Maya Kini is a visual artist, poet, and mother of two who lives in San Francisco. Her poems have appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review, River Heron Review, Wildfire Magazine,* and *Crucible*. Her favorite material is gold for its capacity to stretch, to tell stories, and to endure.

Jillian Moore is an artist and writer based in rural Iowa working primarily in the field of contemporary jewelry and small sculpture. (jillianmoore.net)

Olivia Shih is a contemporary jeweler, artist, and writer based in Oakland, California. Born in the United States and raised in Taiwan, she is interested in the cultural nuances that can be explored through wearable sculpture. In addition to running her eponymous jewelry business, Shih is the assistant editor at *Metalsmith* and writes for both the magazine and Art Jewelry Forum. (@oliviashihdesigns)

Aric Verrastro is a studio jeweler and cofounder of His+His Studio with his husband Vince Pontillo-Verrastro. He received BFA and BS degrees from SUNY Buffalo State University and an MFA degree from Indiana University–Bloomington. Verrastro was selected for Talente 2015 and was a finalist for Art Jewelry Forum's Artist Award. His work can be found in Cooper Hewitt/Smithsonian Design Museum, and Espace Solidor, and has been published by Lark Books and in *American Craft* and *Current Obsession* magazines. (aricverrastro.com)

D Wood is a freelance writer and craft scholar. She edited the essay collection *Craft Is Political* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).



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***L-R** / Artist Market vendor Ana Sanders Rendon. Photo: Brienne Rosner / Samples by Fred Zweig. Photo: Jess Tolbert / Photo: Jess Tolbert / Bill Gangi's Booth at AGTA. Photo: Brienne Rosner / Eleanor Moty (m) with Jess Tolbert (l) and Kerianne Quick (r) / Photo: Jess Tolbert*

SCAN TO VISIT
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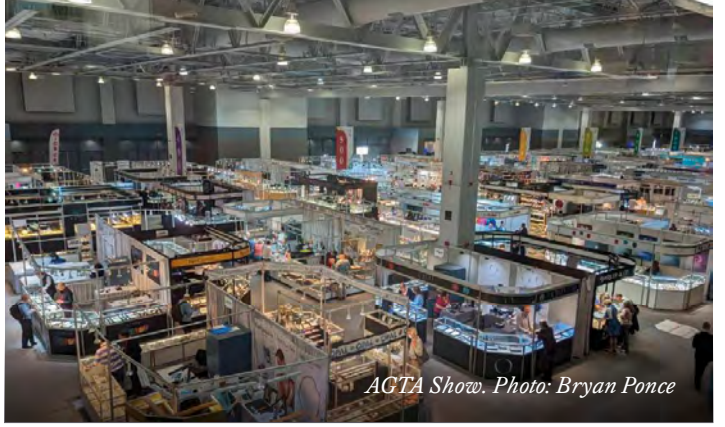
SNAG @ Tucson 2023

In collaboration with Pepetools and Sunstone, SNAG made its Gem Show event debut February 3-5, 2023, and can't wait to return!

Tucson, AZ – The scale and scope of the Tucson Gem Show is hard to capture in words. The Show in totality includes the entire gamut of gemstones, rocks, minerals, animal derived materials, finished jewelry and craft objects, and beyond. As lapidary artist and gem dealer Bill Gangi explained during his talk at SNAG @ Tucson on Saturday, "There are fifty-eight venues here in Tucson this week. I heard the estimate was 50,000 gem sellers and several million buyers...And I don't know if you've noticed, but every spare lot has tents set up on it and motorhomes selling rocks, so there's a lot of unofficial sales going on as well." While Bill self-identifies as "the first guy to go to these shows looking for hidden treasures," his talk provided invaluable information about how to approach purchasing stones.

SNAG @ Tucson was an energetic, multifaceted event at the eclectic Whistle Stop Depot. Friday night kicked off with renowned jeweler and 2020/21 SNAG Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Eleanor Moty signing her book *Quiet Elegance*, and hands-on demonstrations from Sunstone Welders and Fred Zweig. The night concluded with the opening of SNAG's Member Exhibition Bring on the Gems (the extended online exhibition is live on SNAG's website through March 31st). Skylar Boone, University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) Jewelry and Metals Senior Major, shared, "I enjoyed the niche parts of the event, like Fred Zweig's 'Art of Process or Process as Art'. To have him see my excitement and him get excited about it was very cool."

Exhibition installation. Photo: Kerianne Quick



AGTA Show. Photo: Bryan Ponce

Artist Market vendor Paulina Rosas. Photo: Brienne Rosner

Eleanor Moty Booksigning. Photo: Brienne Rosner

AGTA Show. Photo: Bryan Ponce

Sunstone Demonstration. Photo: Brienne Rosner

The event continued Saturday, with an Artists Market featuring both local and out-of-state participants. SNAG closed out the weekend by hosting a Gem Show Tour on Sunday, which started with access to the high-end American Gem Trade Association (AGTA), a highlight for the tour participants. "It was fun because being new to jewelry and metalsmithing I've never been to events like the one's SNAG offered. The introduction was an enlightening and inspiring experience," said Karen Dreher, UTEP Jewelry and Metals Senior Minor.

Andres Delgado, UTEP Jewelry and Metals Senior Major, reflected, "For my first SNAG event it was an amazing experience. because I was able to speak with other makers in the industry. Being able to speak face to face and talk about the processes and fabrication of jewelry was a great way to learn new methods of production that I can incorporate into my own work. The talk Bill Gangi gave on *How to Pick Quality Gemstones* was also quite informative, especially for someone like me who is still learning about stone setting and incorporating stones into my work."

SNAG is already planning our program for 2024 to continue to expand attendees knowledge, skills and community. We hope to establish an annual presence as the only event dedicated to makers and making during the Tucson Gem Show.

SNAG is in deep gratitude to its generous sponsors Pepetools, Sunstone, MJSA, Peters Valley School of Craft and Lindstrom, for making the event possible.

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Fire in the Okanagan, neckpiece, 2016, photo by Hunter Stroud
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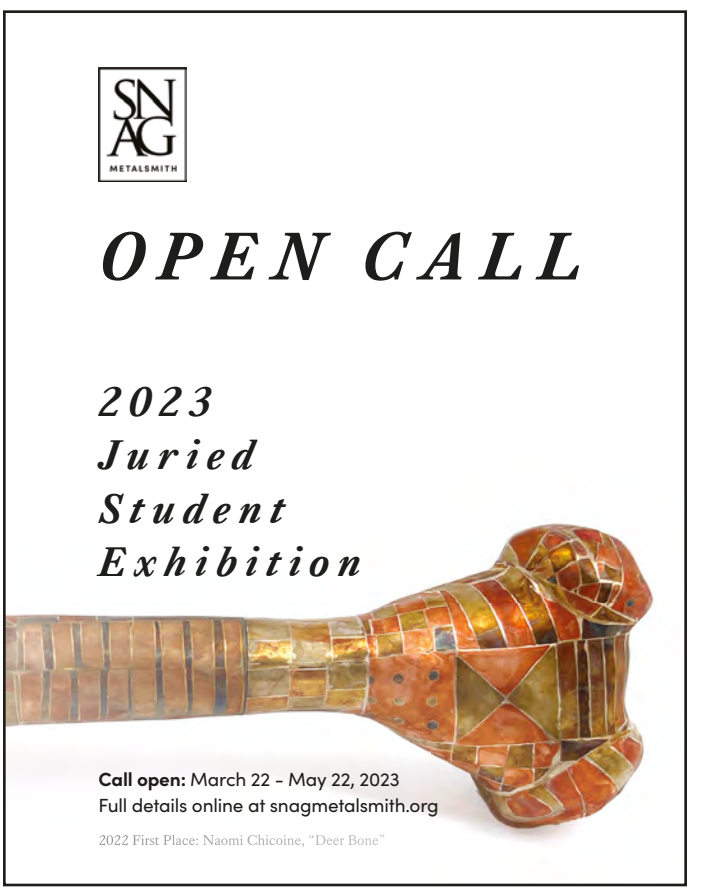
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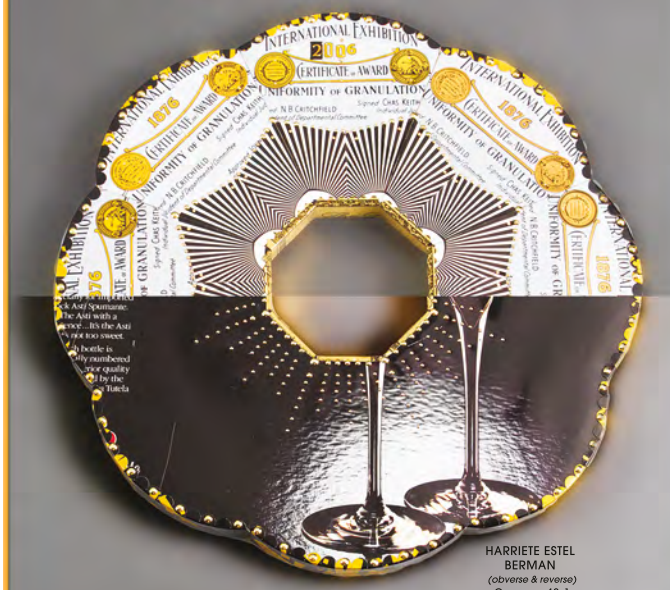

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SNAG METALSMITH

OPEN CALL

METALSMITH magazine invites submissions to a juried call for photography. *Yes, that's right, photography.*

We are seeking creatively styled images of artist-made jewelry, adornment, and metalsmithing that tell a story and present works outside of the typical white background.

Call opens: Dec 1, 2022
Call closes: May 15, 2023, 12:00am EST

Full details about jurors, terms, eligibility, and timeline available online.

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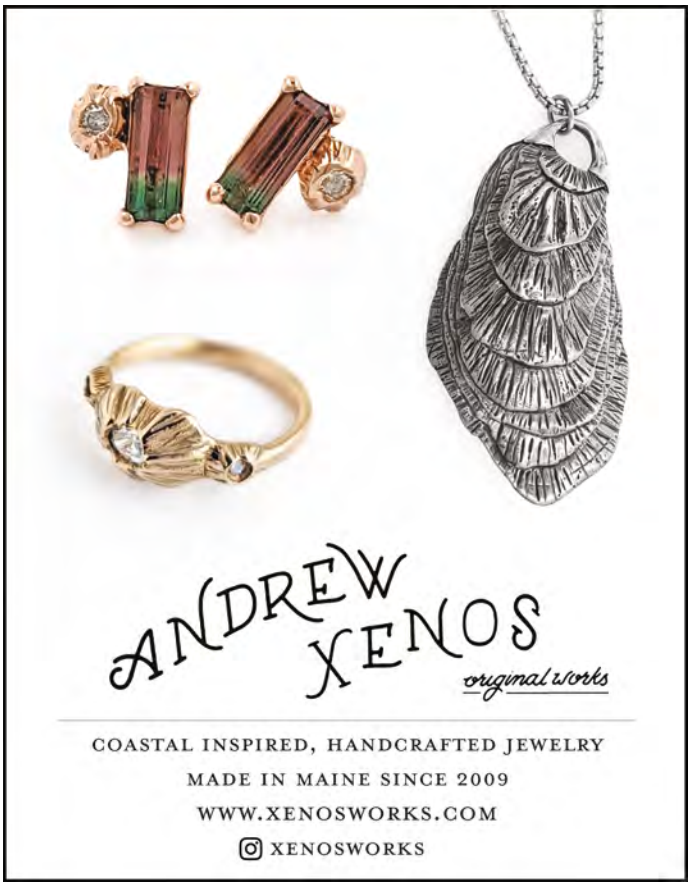
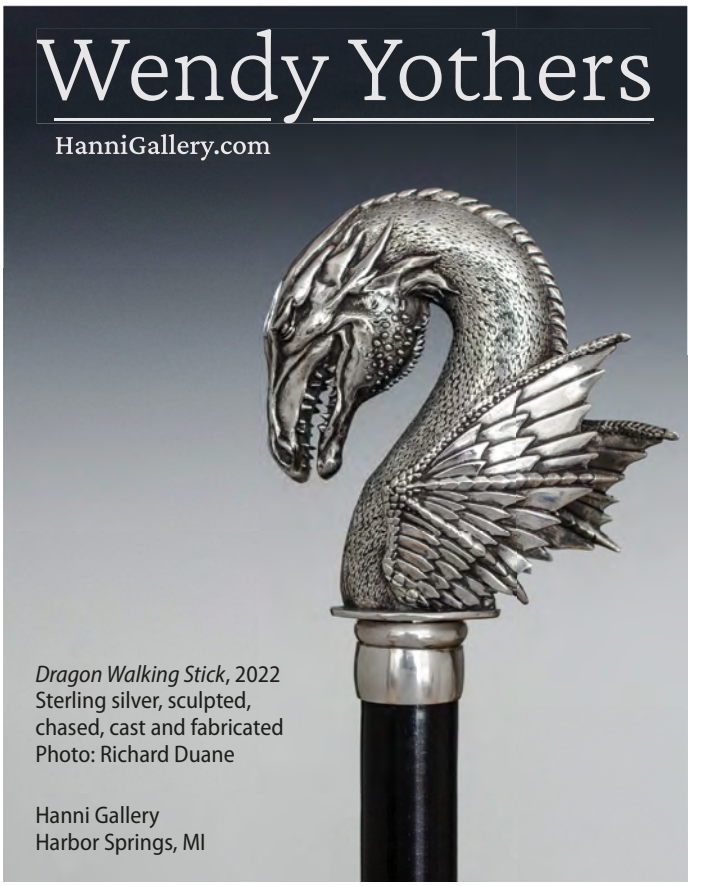
Galen Boone, The SIREN I - Roach Collar + Frond Loincloth, 2018. bronze, silk, velvet. Photo by the artist.





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ARIELLA HAR-EVEN

The pile moved for days, he said
And I can see them all, a mountain
Made of flesh and bones and skin on skin
Death that seems to breathe, that heaves,
That cries out as it freezes
Last words whispered to the wind
Last names swallowed by the earth
And when I breathe, I feel the weight
Of mountains
Moving

Ariella Har-Even
Mountain Series: Bikernieki, Bronna Góra, Blagovshchina, 2022
Aluminum, leather, sterling silver
Above, clockwise from top left:
4½ x 3¼ x ½ in.
3 x 3½ x ½ in.
4 x 2¾ x ½ in.
Photo: Sam Butler

A small and featherless raven crawls through my window
Every night as I sleep
Tell me of Antigone, of myrtle branch on watched white linen
Sing to me of Judith and of justice
She says through glassy eyes and I my lips are parted
but I cannot speak
Only crawl out there and swim through viscous air in search of
pale blue eggs and beetles
I swim and look and all I see are fields of rotting sheaves of men
The shtetl crackling beneath me
Tell me tales of amulets, of golden incantation
Of a golem molded from the ash
Alright, I softly caw to her, and she is gone

Ariella Har-Even
A Bird's Eye View of Hell, 2022
Sterling silver, copper
21½ x 5 x ¼ in.
Photo: Sam Butler

OUT/LOUD:
QUEER STORYTELLING

BY JACKIE ANDREWS

Margo Csipő
Know Yourself at Every Age, 2021
Sterling silver, mother of pearl, acrylic rod, silk thread, pigmented ink, wax, lacquer
4 x 16 x ⅛ in.
Photo: Elliot Keeley

AS I WAS DRAFTING THIS INSTALLMENT of Out/Loud, the Respect for Marriage Act was signed into law on December 13, 2022. The landmark legislation provides nationwide federal protection for same-sex and interracial couples and ensures that no future Supreme Court rulings can remove the crucial civil rights it affords. This historic and monumental victory for the queer community—for many—comes as a relief following the catastrophic overturn of *Roe v. Wade* on June 24.

Beyond the initial influx of celebratory news articles and political reporting—and the personal joy and relief I felt—what struck me most as I scrolled through my Instagram feed was not the sense of celebration from queer friends, loved ones, acquaintances, and community forums; those, I expected. What most inspired me was the sense of resolute dedication I found in the community response: the countless assertions that this legislation merely *reaffirmed* their pride in, commitment to, and love for their identities and relationships. It supported what they already knew—that their queer families are sacred.

The queer communities are worlds defined by chosen family and community care; they are boundlessly resilient, undeterred by hardship, defiant and endlessly imaginative. Queer history is built on the stories of those who have shaped the movement—activists, creators, and community leaders whose work to build a world that reflects them continues to this day. Queerness invites that kind of reinvention and re-envisioning; it also invites stewardship and storytelling for future generations.

The artists in this installment are some of those storytellers and worldbuilders—each with powerful, transformative visions.

Margo Csipő's practice is a marriage of adornment and illustration, drawing inspiration from narrative-based art forms, including animation, graphic novels, and Eastern European folktales (a reference to Csipő's Hungarian heritage). Csipő (she/they) often works with mother of pearl, which—taking cues from scrimshaw bone carving—provides a blank page for them to explore, invent, and carve the stories they want to share with others. She describes her narrative interests in her artist statement:

"I craft tales that seek the answers to questions that the culture I grew up in failed to supply me with. My tales are tools of self-discovery and affirmation."[1] Csipő cites "the voids between these anecdotes"—the stories left out of the mainstream societal narratives—as a fascination of hers and inspiration for her work.

The narrative focus of Csipő's work, combined with their signature vibrant color palette and delicate line quality results in pieces that feel distinctly inviting. Assembled with a system of carefully constructed silver settings, each carved illustration has its own frame, mirroring the sequential narrative structure of a graphic novel. In works like *A Hook and an Eye* and *Know Yourself at Every Age*, Csipő's illustrations often feel quietly contemplative, focused with a softened gaze on small, human moments—like fastening an item of clothing or plucking a dandelion from the grass—that are often seemingly metaphorical. In some instances, the euphemistic nature of the

visual imagery is counterbalanced by a powerfully direct title; such is the case with *Sapphic Voyeur,* a cleverly constructed brooch that acts as a queer take on a pocket image viewer. The work is approachable, yet intimate.

In focusing on such minute, ephemeral aspects of human experience, Csipő manages to strike a balance between universality and specificity, honoring the queer experience, both for themselves and others. "The reality I write is not one of strife," she asserts, "and my narratives can reach resolutions of unity, closeness, and tenderness—affirmations of my own reality."

Wyatt Nestor-Pasicznyk
Minotaur Brooch series, 2021
Self Saved, *My Body is a Maze*, *Self Made*, *Euphoric* (left to right)
Champlevé enamel on gold plated copper, spring steel
Approx. 3½ x 2½ in. each
Photo by the artist

The commitment to celebration and visibility of complex queer identities is shared by Wyatt Nestor-Pasicznyk (he/him), a metalsmith with a technical focus in enameling. Nestor-Pasicznyk's work is influenced by the aesthetics of the rural American wilderness, American Western imagery, and folk art, and his agricultural and equestrian upbringing in a rural, small town inspires much of the visual language of his work. And though his body of work is wide ranging, the belt buckle is a recurrent form—one with a wealth of gender stereotypes and cultural implications that Nestor-Pasicznyk reckons with powerfully. Examples include *Day Rider*, *Touch Up*, and *Fever Dream*. In his artist statement, he describes the appeal of the belt buckle as both a format and a conceptual jumping off point in that he creates "characterizations of narration in a form of body adornment so often masculinized and tied to rural identity and normativity.... As a queer and trans masculine person who is often assumed to be cisgender, the interaction of my own body in a comfortable yet unprecedented atmosphere comes into play."[2]

Beyond the implications of the adornment forms themselves, Nestor-Pasicznyk further unpacks gender stereotypes and expressions in the imagery he creates and the stories they tell, demonstrating their applicability "to fit a different narrative that pertains to transgender people as both makers and artists." By reimagining these narratives, it is Nestor-Pasicznyk's intention to bring more recognition and visibility to rural queer communities and to the complexities of their members.

When translated into meticulously detailed enameled scenes and characters in his signature illustrative style, the idiosyncrasies of Nestor-Pasicznyk's varied visual interests read as both richly layered and cohesive. Combining aspects of Western imagery with depictions of mythical creatures, Nestor-Pasicznyk ascribes a sense of folkloric mythology to the experience of being a trans or gender-nonconforming person in a culture that is historically inhospitable to diversity of gender expression. In pieces like their *Minotaur Brooch* series, including *Self Saved, My Body is a Maze, Self Made,* and *Euphoric,* Nestor-Pasicznyk manages to create clever visual metaphors

Out/Loud investigates shared visual language in the queer community through the lens of adornment. The artists in this series are multidisciplinary and varied, exploring queerness, gender, and identity and interpreting adornment broadly through surface embellishments, color palettes, and engaging the body through installations, sculpture, and wearable objects and costuming. Each installment will explore a singular aspect or theme of queer aesthetics. The resulting works are celebratory, exuberant, defiant, and inquisitive—they pose questions about the politics of bodies and how we express ourselves; they disregard rules and examine the privilege, complexity, and danger that comes with visibility; and they imagine queer futures.

and imagery hybridizations that are intriguing and simultaneously whimsical yet profound. Nestor-Pasicznyk invites viewers to embrace being "self-made"—to reimagine our own histories and identities, and envision a future that reflects our true selves.

For Sol Diaz, that future is Indigenous. The jeweler behind the brand Soelia and a cofounder of Queer Metalsmiths, Diaz (they/them) describes the primary inspirations behind their work: "Indigenous futurism, which envisions what my Mayan ancestors from Honduras would wear in a future where colonialism never took place; and spirals, which reflect the different cycles/states within my inner being."[3]

Often taking form as kinetic headpieces, amulets, and talismanic adornments, Diaz's work presents a dynamic balance of two central visual concepts: traditional handcraft and science fiction. Diaz endeavors to create jewelry pieces that combine function with "an energetic connection to nature during sacred ceremonies."[4] The resulting works, such as *Ancestral Vision, Futurism Mask*, feel elegantly reverent, yet playful.

With settings in patinated and polished silver, Diaz gives materials like abalone, baroque pearl, and Swarovski crystal a mystical, even otherworldly quality. As seen in pieces like *Insight, Foresight, Third Eye Necklace* and *Vision Ring,* third eyes and other mystic, protective symbols are recurrent forms in Diaz's work. Across formats, their jewelry invites possibility—the possibilities of an open mind, an expansive vision, or even a portal into the future Diaz imagines.

The possibilities of futurism also abound in the work of Qil Jones (they/them), a self-described "facecrafter" and the visionary behind BLACKMARZIAN. For Jones, BLACKMARZIAN is defined by four core concepts: "processing Black myths of dreaming, glitching, worldbuilding, and liberating."[5] The distinctive facial adornments of BLACKMARZIAN's *Ti AMENDMENT Collection* are some of Jones's most compelling works; each "reinitializes the symbolic headcrest format with pure titanium components."

Sol Diaz
Ancestral Vision, Futurism Mask, 2021
Sterling silver
Dimensions variable
Photo by the artist

Sol Diaz
Vision Ring, 2021
Sterling silver, abalone
Photo by the artist

Left and below:
Qil Jones
pennybandit face, 2022
Aluminum, copper penny, nylon paracord, aluminum rivets
127 x 65 x 60 mm
Photo (left): DeeDee @deedeebebad
Photo below by the artist

Qil Jones
blackspore headcrest, 2021
Titanium, copper, obsidian, aluminum rivets
105 x 41 x 28 mm
Photo: Arely Marisol Peña
@arelymarisolpena

The headcrests are modeled after Afro combs, held in place via zigzag tines. In works like *Pennybandit Face*, the precision and intricacy of Jones's designs trace the topography of the face so seamlessly they almost appear tattooed on.

For Jones, the wearer's face is far from a blank canvas: "A face is a tool.... It can be used to create myth and live in it too," Jones explains in their artist statement. "With this understanding, I retool faces with useful aspects of metal. I leave it to (you) to make it purposeful. I leave it to (you) to make it personal."[6]

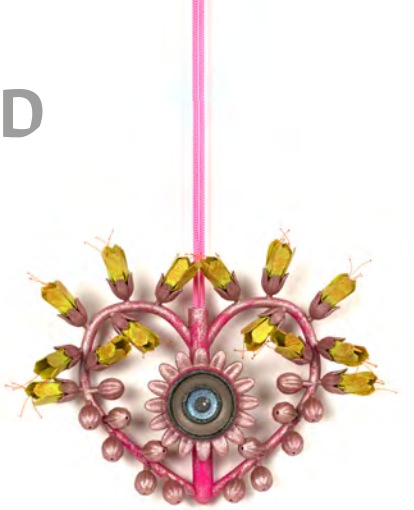
Crafted using a combination of digital illustrations and CNC-milled sheet metal, and hand-finished with occasional stone settings, the digital-to-hand fabrication of BLACKMARZIAN designs acts as a conduit for Jones's conceptual interests. The digital-handcraft hybridization of Jones's process is a clever extension of their recent studio explorations in folklore and Afropresentism (an emerging genre that explores an Afrofuturist lived reality).[7]

Creating work with varied approaches and mediums, Csipő, Nestor-Pasicznyk, Diaz, and Jones give us comfort and courage with their work. They remind us to appreciate small moments of beauty and resilience. They encourage us to be stewards of our heritage, and to celebrate and care for our communities. They invite us into portals to unknown worlds and new dimensions, and give us the tools to build the futures we imagine. With their guidance, we realize: we each can be storytellers and worldbuilders, too.

1 All Margo Csipő quotes from artist statement, https://margocsipo.com/about. / **2** All Wyatt Nestor-Pasicznyk quotes from artist statement, https://www.wyattnp.com/blog. / **3** Sol Diaz profile, Queer Metalsmiths, https://www.queermetalsmiths.com/sol-diaz-portfolio. / **4** Sol Diaz, "How Soelia Was Born," https://soelianyc.com/pages/how-soelia-was-born. / **5** "FAQ," BLACKMARZIAN, https://blackmarzian.com/faq. / **6** "About," BLACKMARZIAN, https://blackmarzian.com/about. / **7** "Afropresentism" as an emerging ideology within Afrofuturism. The term is attributed to Yale scholar Neema Githere, a self-described "artist and guerrilla theorist based in the #digitaldiaspora." Githere coins the term as "a digital genre fusing archival, fine art, documentary practices on and through new media, in the expression of an Afrofuturist lived reality." Tobi Onabolu, *Afropresentism: Black Presence in the Diaspora* (2018), https://tobionabolu.com/afropresentism-1; Neema Githere, https://www.findingneema.online.

YOU ASKED, THEY ANSWERED

ARIC VERRASTRO



Aric Verrastro is a studio jeweler based in Buffalo, New York. aricverrastro.com

Hashtag Heart Succulent, 2019
3D-printed nylon, steel, polyester cord, thread, acrylic paint
20 x 7 x 1½ in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

The Bigger the Bloom ... (earrings), 2018
3-printed nylon, steel, sterling silver, thread, acrylic paint
3 x 3½ x ½ in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

What is the biggest difference in the creation process between art jewelry and fine jewelry?

Art jewelry takes lots of experimentation and conceptual ideation relative to the material choices and form. Fine jewelry doesn't necessarily require conceptual drive; it can be repetitive in nature, it's made with precious metal and gemstones, and it's geared toward everyday wear. Art jewelry is conceptual, one-of-a-kind; it requires the creator to be a material scientist, and challenges wearability. The two tend to overlap like a Venn diagram, which is one of the reasons I enjoy being active in both spaces.

What is the ratio of time spent on making art jewelry and fine jewelry? How do you find a balance between the two?

I wish I could honestly say there is a balance but that'd be a lie—I work a nine-to-five and make the time after those forty hours/week for creating art jewelry. Yes, I often feel drained, but I am addicted to making jewelry, so the passion for this medium keeps me excited in the studio. I give myself deadlines and goals to reach so I have something to strive for, which helps with motivation. As a fine jeweler I am constantly learning new tricks of the trade that are all applicable to my own work.

Do you like being a bench jeweler? If yes, what do you like about it?

My favorite part of being a bench jeweler is creating something that can be passed down generationally and that has an emotional attachment with the customer. To put it simply, jewelry is meant to make people happy, and if I can be a part of spreading the joy I feel fulfilled by it.

On the flip side, it can often be frustrating with its necessity for precision and boring when the work lacks variety. A way through the monotony is to constantly challenge your technique and efficiency to override those feelings. Being competitive with myself can be fun.

If you could choose a second career that isn't in the jewelry industry, what would you choose and why?

If jewelry weren't my passion I would be in the fashion industry either designing clothes or styling. To put it simply, I LOVE clothes! Clothes say so much about you; they can change your mood, and they totally boost your self-confidence. They define the way you present yourself to the world, which affects how the world views you. I am aware that the two industries are intertwined—the leap from one to the other is not far—so maybe that jump is in the near future.

Right:
El Sueño de una Noche de Verano, 2018
3D-printed nylon, steel, sterling silver, thread, acrylic paint
4½ x 4 x 2 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

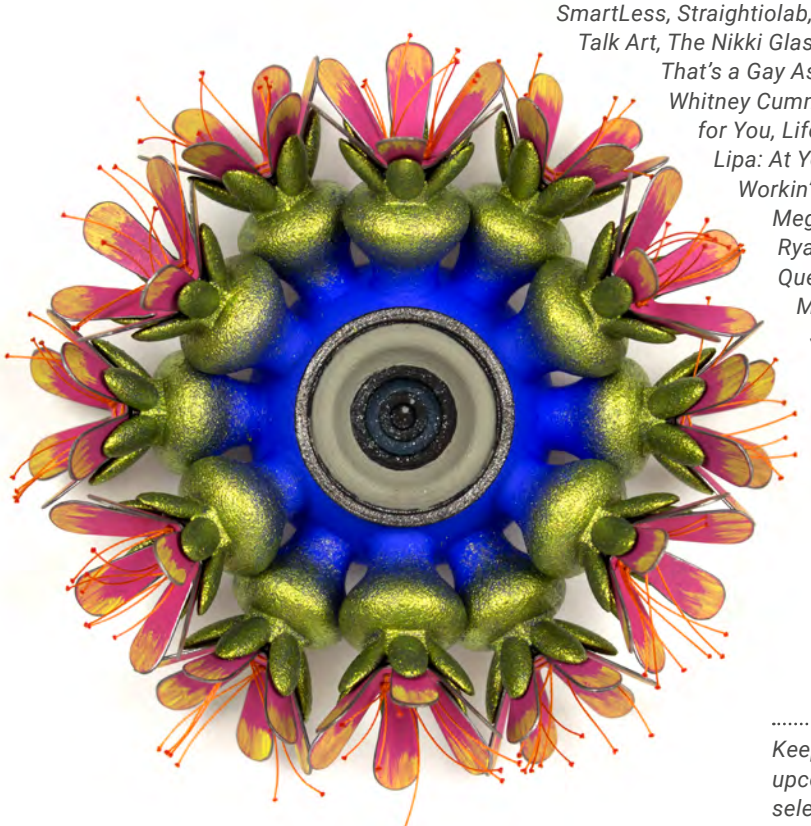
Who do you look up to in the jewelry field? Why do you like them?

The work I admire the most in the jewelry field is by Tanel Veenre. His art jewelry is beautiful, unique, well conceived, and easily recognizable. In addition to his conceptual work, he creates a line of production jewelry, as well as a fashion line. The ability to create successful work in all the different arenas is something to aspire to.

Do you listen to music or podcasts or audiobooks while you're working? What are you listening to?

I have noise-canceling earbuds, which help me tune in and drown out the world around me. All I listen to are podcasts. It is easy for me to pay attention to both; podcasts actually assist with my focus on the task at hand. I am listening to so many so I have enough to last through the entire day. Here is a running list: *Armchair Expert, SmartLess, Straightiolab, Las Culturistas, Talk Art, The Nikki Glaser Podcast, That's a Gay Ass Podcast, Whitney Cummings's Good for You, Life Is Short, Dua Lipa: At Your Service, Workin' On It with Meghan Trainor & Ryan Trainor, Minnie Questions with Minnie Driver,* and *Shut Up Evan*.

Hashtag Succulent, 2019
3D-printed nylon, steel, sterling silver, thread, acrylic paint
6 x 6 x 2 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist



Zafiro, 2018
3D-printed nylon, steel, sterling silver, thread, acrylic paint
7 x 5½ x 2½ in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Keep an eye on our Instagram @snagmetalsmith for upcoming opportunities to ask questions to a rotating selection of makers, educators, gallerists, curators, small business owners, and more.

JALNAR DHANANI: CREATING WITH PURPOSE

BY OLIVIA SHIH

Double Beryl Veil Earring, 2023
14k yellow gold, 2–3 mm green beryl, 1 mm box chain
Various dimensions
Photo courtesy of the artist

Jalnar Dhanani, 2021

Photo: Stefen Pompee

GROWING UP AS A PERSON OF COLOR in Chattanooga, Tennessee, was a trial by fire for Jalnar Dhanani. Being both Palestinian and Indian, she stood out from her homogenous community. The ideal girl at her school was white, blonde, petite, and Christian, and she was none of those things. She couldn't alter her appearance, so she begged her mother to rename her Sally, the whitest name she could think of. When she attended a YMCA camp, the Christian counselors singled her out for being different and told her they would pray for her soul.

To deal with the unrelenting racism, isolation, and a burgeoning eating disorder, Dhanani turned to making jewelry. She collected nuts and other seeds during recess, then drilled holes into them with her pencil. Once home, she strung the makeshift beads onto fishing wire to create jewelry; she even sneaked out of bed to work during the quiet nights. "Making things with my hands helps me process everything," she says.[1]

A metals class in high school led to a jewelry summer program at SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design), which led to an associate's degree in Jewelry Design from FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology). She also took internships with Bliss Lau, Gillian Conroy, and Jessica Elliot before rounding out her FIT education with a bachelor's business degree in Production Management for Textiles.

Eager for more experience—and despite being an introvert—she worked retail at the Manhattan jewelry store Love Adorned. Working a people-facing job was draining, but she soon landed her dream job as a bench jeweler at

2.5 kg and Pavé 1 kg Weight Plates, 2020
14k rose gold, 1.5 mm rubies,
1.2 mm cable chain
2.5 kg pendant: 11 x 2 mm
1 kg pendant: 9 x 2 mm
Photo courtesy of the artist

Catbird, a trendy Brooklyn jewelry store and brand with cultural cachet.

It wasn't long before her rose-tinted glasses shattered. "It was a brutal and challenging job," says Dhanani. "I almost grew to hate jewelry because of how incredibly overworked and underpaid the jewelers were." Because her pay wasn't enough to cover both food and rent, she met with her manager to discuss a raise. The manager's response? "Open up a credit card because everyone has a little debt around here. It's no big deal!"

Although Dhanani did learn to set diamonds and fabricate tiny jewelry, the most valuable thing she took away from three years at Catbird were lifelong friendships built on shared work trauma. To alleviate her worsening mental health, she got into powerlifting and fitness with the encouragement of her then boyfriend, a strength-training coach.

"Lifting weights and building physical strength was unlike anything I'd ever tried, and it gave me an entirely new perspective.... Since middle school, [I was] perpetually trying to shrink myself," explains Dhanani. "When I picked up a barbell, something switched in my brain. I went from wanting to look smaller to wanting to feel stronger. Caring less about what my body looked like was liberating."

Buoyed by a life-altering mindset shift, Dhanani created a solid gold pendant in the shape of a weight plate for herself; in darker moods, the pendant served as a reminder of both what her body was capable of and the warmth of her supportive powerlifting community. She wore the pendant to the gym and, to her surprise, stumbled on a niche market. Her fellow gym-goers instantly connected with her fitness jewelry on a deep, personal level and wanted their own. News of her work traveled far via word-of-mouth, and the orders soon flooded in.

That's how Dhanani came to spend her nights and weekends creating miniature weight plates, dumbbells, and kettle bells in sterling silver and 14k gold. She then expanded her offerings—aptly named the *Benchmark Collection*—to include pendants, earrings, and rings, and offered customized weight numbers in pounds or kilograms.

People flocked to her collection, and orders were placed to honor a wide range of milestones, from hitting a personal fitness goal to celebrating first-time mothers and their newborn babies. The jeweler also cultivated fresh interest by creating limited runs of special-edition jewelry, including ones with stone inlay, resin inlay, and engraved stars.

By 2018, the *Benchmark Collection* provided the financial cushion for Dhanani to quit her job and focus on her business full-time. She made time for experimental play in the studio and tinkered with little pieces of leftover box chain. Most jewelers scrap end cuts of box chain; unlike the common cable chain, box chain is difficult to reconnect. But, ever the devotee of problem-solving and sustainability, she developed a method of laser-welding box chain to earrings made with recycled gold scraps and mismatched diamond melee. Each piece is developed to sway and catch light in just the right way.

Almas Kettlebell, 2020
Oxidized sterling silver,
3 mm post-consumer white diamond,
2.7 mm curb chain
16 x 10.5 mm
Photo courtesy of the artist

Right:
Large Na'Na' Pendant and
Small Keffiyeh Pendant, 2022
14k yellow gold (recycled in studio),
3 mm Ethiopian emerald
18 x 11 mm
10 x 6 mm
Photo courtesy of the artist

Below left:
Black Diamond Veil Earring, 2021
14k yellow gold, 2–3 mm rose cut
black diamonds, 1 mm box chain
22 x 7 mm
Photo courtesy of Ex Voto

Below right:
Grey Diamond Veil Earring, 2021
14k yellow gold, 3 mm rose cut gray
diamond, 1 mm box chain
20 x 6 mm
Photo courtesy of Ex Voto

"The [*Veil*] earrings ... really allow me to be creative with draped elements that express a lot of movement.... These earrings are inspired by Palestinian textures, tastes, and textiles, as is the new work I'm launching under my own name, Jalnar—they have helped me find my voice as a fine jeweler in a way that has been personally extremely validating."

Although Dhanani grew up with her Palestinian mother, she mistakenly thought she was Jordanian until she was in her mid-teens. Her grandparents were born in Palestine but were pushed out of their homes in 1948, so they resettled in Ramallah, which at the time was part of Jordan. This trauma was compounded by the occupation of the West Bank by Israel in 1967. Since finding out her true heritage, Dhanani has spent countless hours combing the internet to figure out what being Palestinian means to her.

"The more I learn about ... the trauma my family went through and continues to go through," she explains, "the more obvious it is why I am the way I am, and the more necessary it feels to figure out a way to express myself. I've engraved these pieces with everything from stalks of Mama's fresh mint leaves to feather-and-bird *Tatreez* (traditional Palestinian embroidery) motifs."

She also uses her social media platform to post about the ongoing violence and genocide in Palestine. Although she doesn't see herself as an activist, she isn't afraid to be vocal. Her Instagram stories highlight the reality of colonialism and ethnic cleansing in Palestine. She shares, "I wish I could get people to understand how demoralizing it is to watch horrors happen to your people, their land, their homes, and their children, every day and have the majority of the Western world say it's just simply too complicated for them to [try] to understand."

Her activism is also evident in her involvement in the NoLo Studios Collective Residency Program. Two of her friends from

Taqsim Ring, 2022
14k yellow gold, 2–3 mm
brilliant cut gray diamonds
7 mm wide, size 6
Photo courtesy of the artist

Catbird, Elana Noy and Laila Lott, leased half a floor in a building in Bushwick, Brooklyn, then partitioned it out into smaller studios called NoLo Studios. The diverse occupants include jewelers, ceramicists, photographers, fiber artists, hair stylists, and tattoo artists. Starting in 2021, Dhanani teamed up with Noy, Lott, and NYC Jewelry Week to offer a residency to BIPOC jewelers, who have a harder time breaking into the jewelry industry.

The program provides a workbench for ten months, a set of hand tools the artist can take with them after the residency, gem and metal purchasing credits, photography assistance, and website assistance. Now in its third year, the program is funded by jewelry raffles, industry sponsors, and additional fundraising.

"I fully understand how gatekeepy and daunting this industry is," explains Dhanani. "It's incredibly expensive to accumulate the proper tools and equipment—the materials are also expensive—then there's the education and time one must spend practicing. Gatekeeping is bullshit, and it bothers me. If you're confident in your own work, why wouldn't you want to open up this jewelry world to someone else?"

Although Dhanani was scorched by her experiences growing up as a person of color in an overwhelmingly white, racist, and sexist community, she's turned her fiery pain into action and community-building. She's even returned to Chattanooga, but this time with a tattoo in Arabic running down her left arm, reading: "If you get irritated by every rub, how will you ever polish?"

The quote, attributed to Rumi, reminds Dhanani to not react blindly in the midst of intense emotion. Instead, she chooses careful thought and consideration, and strives to sit back and breathe—making room to parse emotions, reassess, and move forward with purpose.

To see more of Dhanani's work, find her on Instagram @jjjalnar or http://www.jjjalnar.com.

To apply or contribute to the NoLo Studios Collective Residency Program, visit http://www.nolostudiosbrooklyn.com.

Farha Ring and *Farha Ear Cuff*, 2023
14k yellow gold, oxidized silver,
1.5 mm rubies
6 mm wide, size 6 (ring)
17 x 2.5 mm (ear cuff)
Photo courtesy of the artist

1 All quotes are from a virtual interview and email correspondence with the author in December 2022 and January 2023.

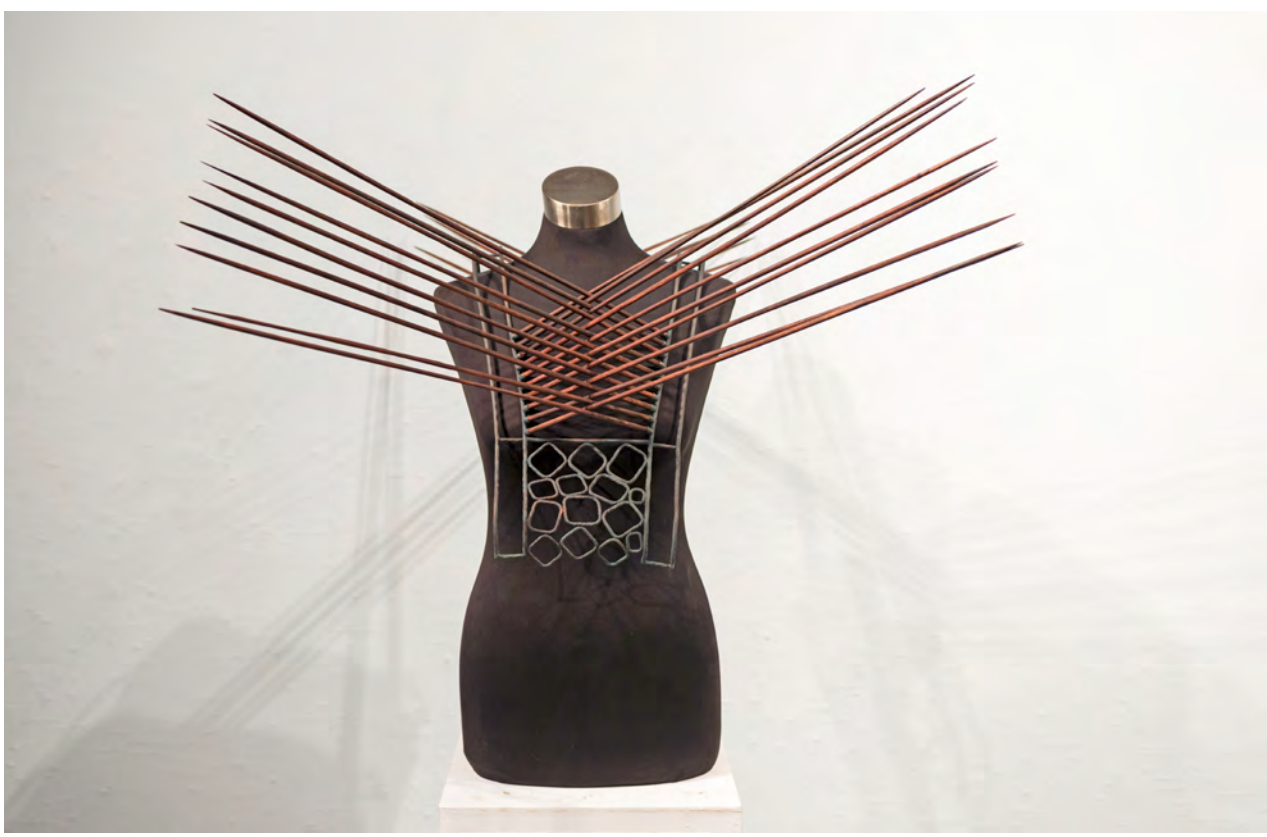
ASK ABOUT US

BY FUNLOLA COKER

WALKING INTO A CONFERENCE WITH YOUR PEERS should be an exciting experience. Even when you set aside social anxiety, nerves, or any uncomfortable feelings that arise with large gatherings, as a Black or Brown metalsmith you can almost guarantee that you will either be the only one, or one in a handful. You may be excited to see your friends, but you are always on alert. Is someone going to mix me up with that other Black metalsmith?

When will Black and Brown jewelers and metalsmiths only have to worry about social anxiety, and not be confronted with ignorance as well? While I am beginning to see changes in the field, the shift has been painfully slow over the span of my fifteen years in the community as a maker, student, and teacher. We need to be seen—we need to keep the conversation going until meeting a Black or Brown smith is no longer a surprise.

At this moment in our collective struggle, it feels ridiculous to have to keep saying that Black and Brown jewelers are not a monolith. Our diversity spans beyond beaded jewelry, wire-wrapping, and hobbies. While we proudly engage in those crafts, we are also bladesmiths, welders, jewelers, metalsmiths, and more. This selection of five artists are doing their thing and making waves in their circles, but they are only a few among many. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list—so reach out to your friends, ask about us. The next time you walk into an event in the field, like a conference or other gathering of 'smiths, look around and ask yourself, "Why aren't there more Black and Brown people here?"



Glover Marfo
Rendered Invisible, 2022
Brass screw, bullet casing, broom
3 x 5 x ½ in.
Photo: An Wang

Glover Marfo
Personal Space, 2022
Copper, wood, patina
31 x 31 x 18 in.
Photo: An Wang

GLOVER MARFO (he/him)

BORN Asamankese, Ghana
CURRENTLY Oxford, Ohio
glovermarfo.com

In my childhood games, I used to manipulate and crush empty tins of milk, cocoa (Milo) cans, and other found objects into toy cars, bicycles, etc. Over time, this habit extended to real toys and other objects like wristwatches and other wearables. Yet, I couldn't find the connection between my creative exploits and academics as a young man.

Taking my first metals class got me fascinated by the methodological approach to metals and the resulting art. It offered me an opportunity to think about functionality and sculptural objects. I got interested in how different approaches result in various styles and shapes. The metalsmithing field showed me how my creative mind and abilities could help shape the world.

Glover Marfo
Personal Space Ring, 2022
NuGold, wood
3½ x 3½ x 3½ in.
Photo: An Wang

AINA SULLIVAN

BORN Memphis, Tennessee
CURRENTLY Derry, New Hampshire
blackstonealchemy.com

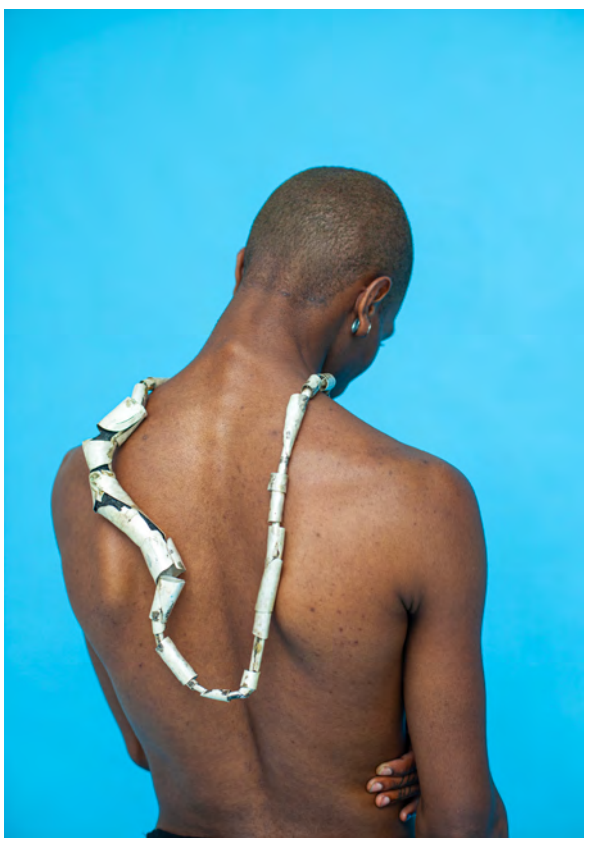
My professional journey in metalworking has been a winding one. I first began dabbling in the craft in 2009 through the FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) pre-college metals program. During my time at Smith College, I took a break from jewelry-making to explore other forms of art. However, I eventually returned to jewelry-making, specifically wire-wrapping, and became enamored with the intricate weaving techniques and the idea of creating secure connections without soldering—similar to how my ancestors crafted ceremonial adornments. My current practice is a form of tribute to my heritage through the medium of craft.

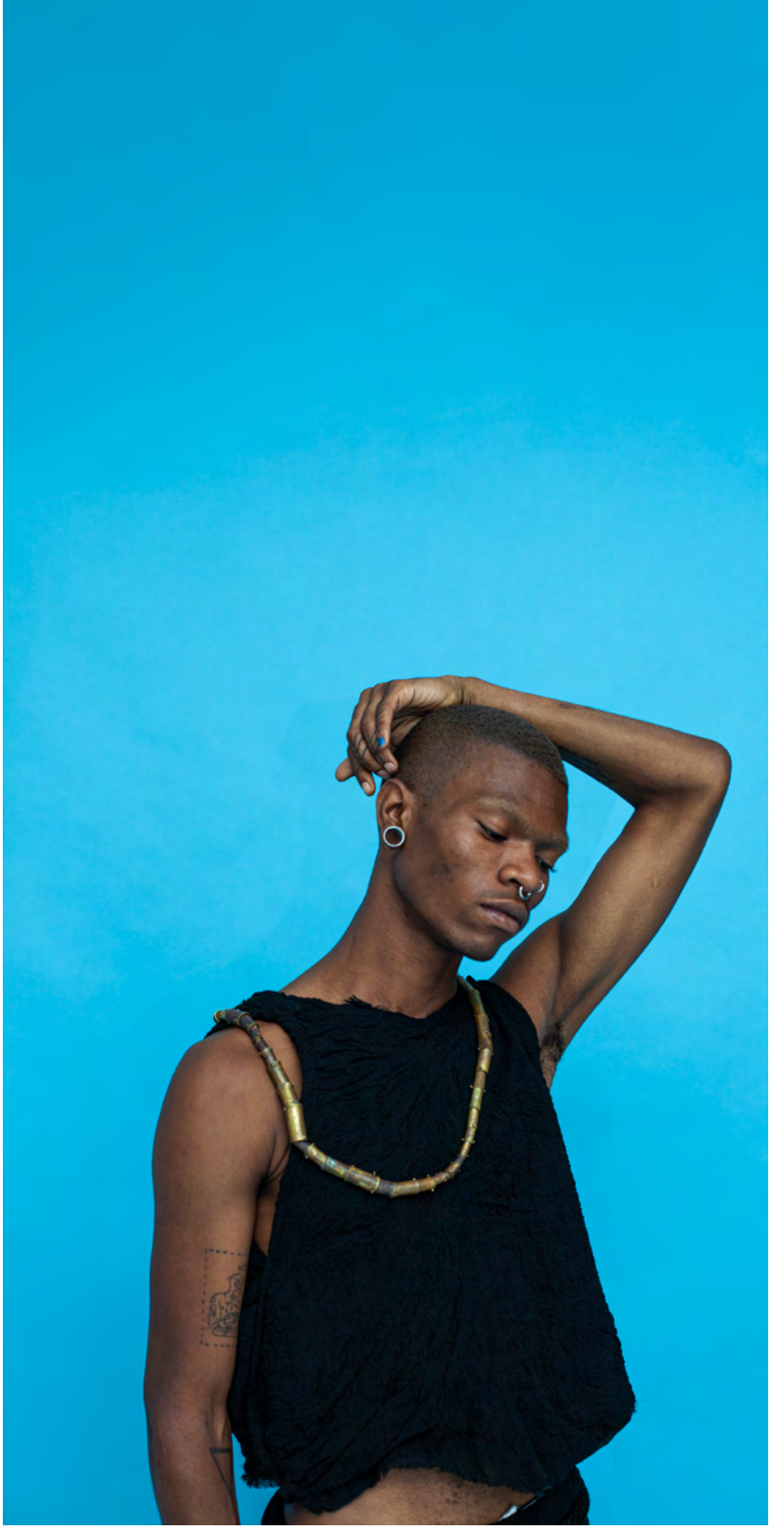
Above:
Aina Sullivan
Rose Quartz Amulet, 2022
Copper wire, rose quartz cabochon, jade cabochon, 39 x 18 mm
Photo by the artist

Right:
Aina Sullivan
Blue Kyanite Amulet, 2021
Copper wire, hand-cut blue kyanite cabachon
42 x 20 mm
Photo by the artist

Opposite:
Aina Sullivan
Dendritic Opal Amulet, 2021
Copper wire, faceted dendritic opal cabochon
33 x 18 mm
Photo by the artist

Nanette Pengelley
Conceal, 2015
Sterling silver, charcoal
17 x 9 in.
Photo: Eric Magnussen





Nanette Pengelley
Assemble, 2015
Brass, sterling silver
16 x 9 in.
Photo: Eric Magnussen

NANETTE PENGELLEY
(she/her)

BORN West Palm Beach, Florida
CURRENTLY Tallahassee, Florida
nanette-pengelley.squarespace.com

I took an enameling elective my freshman year at MassArt and fell in love with metal as a medium. I had no idea that I would one day be a metalsmith, but I felt so empowered to hold a torch and use a saw for the first time. Since then, it has been my privilege to create art that the wearer can use to embody a memory, a family connection—an experience.

Nanette Pengelley
Hew, 2015
Suede, walnut, brass, gold rivets
16 x 17 in.
Photo: Eric Magnussen

THEODORO SKEETE

BORN Bronx, New York
RAISED Atlanta, Georgia
CURRENTLY Savannah, Georgia
locometalworks.bigcartel.com

I originally got into welding because I wanted to build bicycle frames. While I was attending tech school for welding I worked part-time at a blacksmith shop forging and making oyster knives. After school I worked for a few different architectural welding companies for seven years. COVID hit and I was out of work for several months and became restless. I started my own small company in 2020. While I still do some architectural fabrication, I really enjoy creating fun and functional decor for a customer's space.

Theodoro Skeete
Resting Owl, 2020
Steel
11 x 4 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Theodoro Skeete
The Call Is Coming from the Billiards Room, 2021
Steel, stainless steel, repurposed pool balls
18 x 8 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Theodoro Skeete
Custom Candleholder, 2022
Steel, stainless steel
9 x 4 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Elaine Zukowski
Slipknot, 2021
Vintage glass beads, silver, steel wire
9 x 3 x ¾ in.
Photo: Zbigniew Zukowski

Elaine Zukowski
Blue Balloons (earrings), 2022
Vintage glass beads, silver, steel wire
3 x 2 x 1 in.
Photo: Elliot Keely

Opposite:
Elaine Zukowski
White Hoops, 2021
Vintage glass beads, silver, steel wire
2¾ x 2 x ½ in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

ELAINE ZUKOWSKI

(she/her)

BORN Baltimore, Maryland

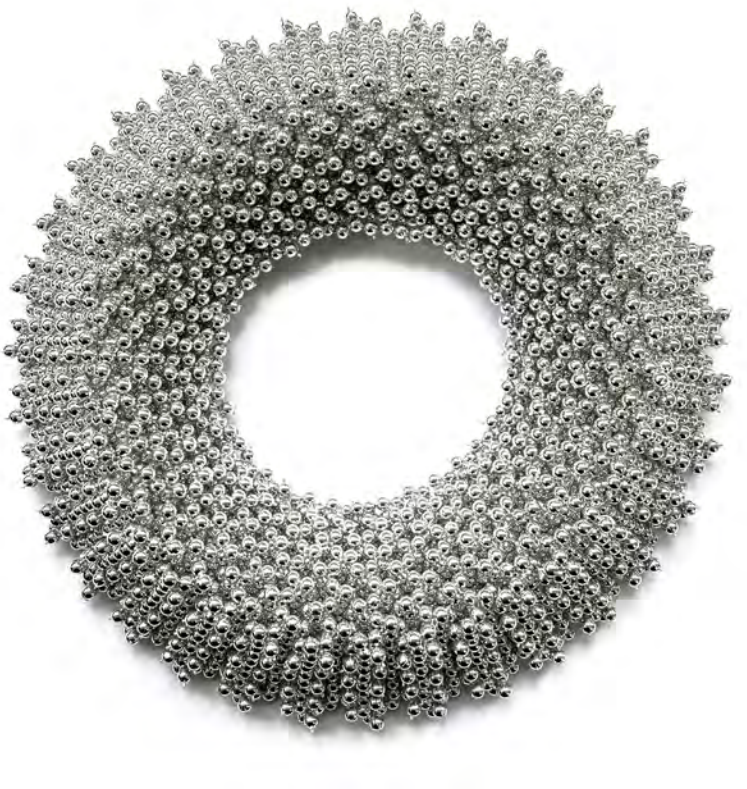
CURRENTLY Baltimore, Maryland

baltimorejewelrycenter.org/elaine-zukowski

I discovered metalsmithing several years after completing undergraduate studies in fiber art at MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art). The myriad ways in which metal can be manipulated captivated me; I was obsessive in a desire to acquire skills. In recent years I have brought fibers processes into my art jewelry practice.

KELLY DZIOBA: PLEASURE IN PROCESS

BY REBEKAH FRANK



Radial (with detail), 2021
Party beads
12 x 12 x 2 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

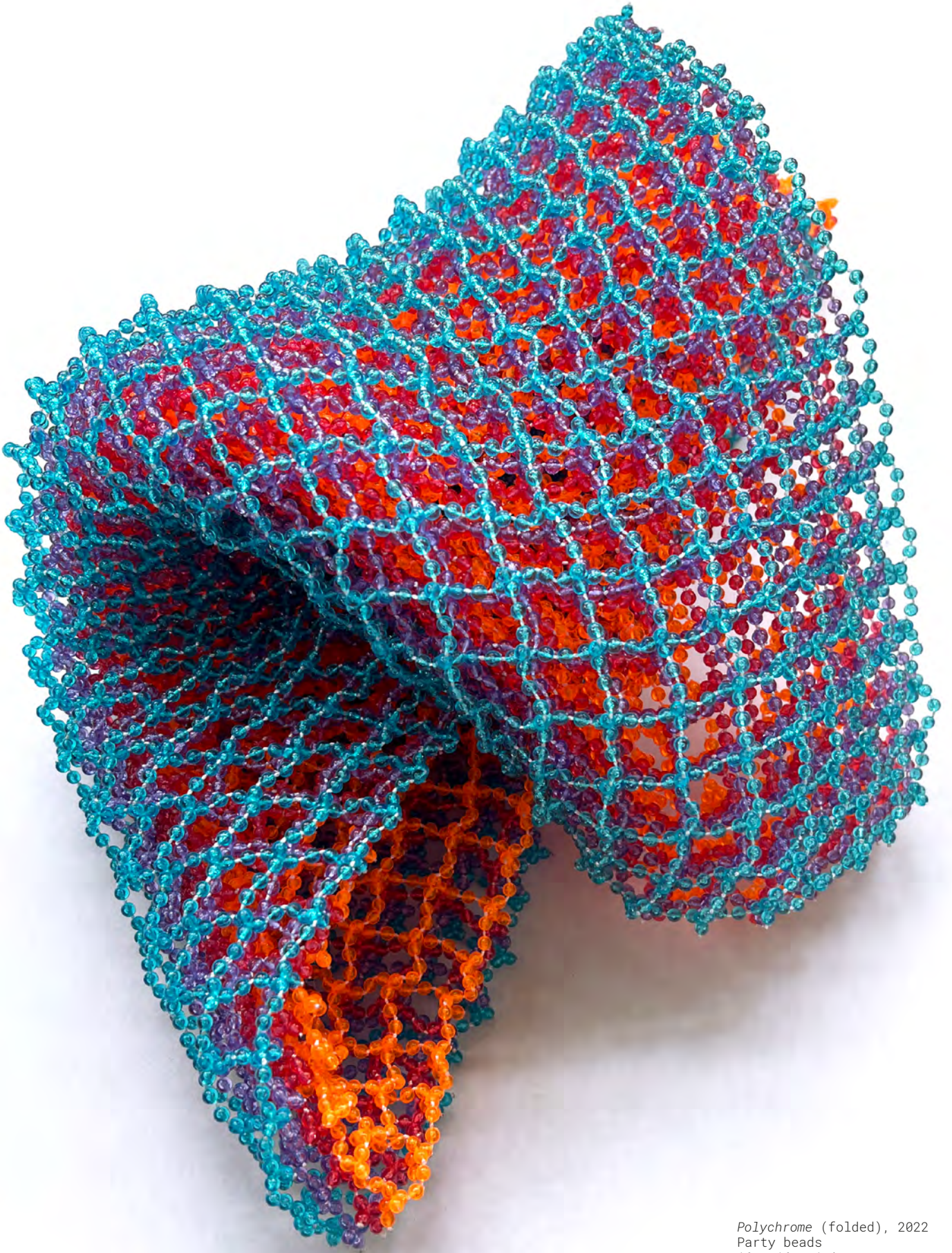
THE LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE of textile design intrigues Connecticut-based artist Kelly Dzioba. Textile patterns are planned out through weaving drafts that provide an abstract, visual representation of the pattern mapped out in color-coded grids. Joseph Marie Jacquard invented loom punch cards in 1801 that allowed unskilled workers to weave complex patterns, an early step in the evolution of computers. Loom punch cards and weaving drafts communicate textile patterns through the symbols and holes on their two-dimensional surfaces, but they also convey color, texture, weight, and potential to those who can decipher the code.

While the imagery and aesthetics of planning for textiles engages Dzioba, she doesn't romanticize the labor of weaving. She found the repetition of movement required by weaving hostile to her body, and the chemically treated textiles she used for an early commission resulted in an allergic reaction. She shares:

> I often approach my work through a weaving mindset, however at a certain point I found myself struggling to take joy in the process of weaving by hand. The loom is a marvelous yet rigid piece of technology, not always forgiving or adaptable to the human body. I found this rigidity reflected in my own approach to the medium; because I was not taking pleasure in the physical process of weaving, I was not able to create a fruitful dialogue with my material.

Even so, Dzioba remains fascinated by weaving, and has taken her interest in the language and structure of textile into a rather unorthodox material: prelinked, plastic beads. This commercially available material can be purchased as festive garlands, Mardi Gras necklaces, and other toy necklaces. She uses a simple twist to weave the beaded strands together, taking advantage of the perfection of mass production that standardizes the distance between the beads. Dzioba finds there is something pleasing about work that requires no other intervention, where the method of connection is the material itself; she's found that she innately trusts cold connections.

The material, generally known as party beads, is instantly recognizable, a magical material that can transform a school gym into a prom dreamscape or an office into a festive holiday party—or be tossed into the bacchanalian crowd at Mardi Gras. Looking for material inspiration after recognizing the need to move away from traditional weaving, Dzioba discovered the potential of party beads from the burst of serotonin she got just from seeing them in the craft store. Dzioba, who is neurodivergent, finds the process of twisting the brightly colored strands into layers calming. By shifting her creative practice away from a physically punishing and unsympathetic process she was able to identify a uniquely personal stimming technique. Stimming, a



Polychrome (folded), 2022
Party beads
16 x 16 x 1 in.
(dimensions variable)
Photo courtesy of the artist

repetitive, self-stimulatory behavior, is a coping mechanism used by neurodiverse people to soothe their nervous systems.

Initially, Dzioba studied textiles at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia with Warren Seelig and Mi-Kyoung Lee. In addition to teaching traditional textile techniques, these professors encouraged her to approach textiles as a concept, focusing on the relationship between people and the physical materiality of textiles. For her thesis, Dzioba explored the ways textiles age through use, wear, and tear, mimicking the parts of the body that they touch, such as the knee or elbow. There's a symmetry here: her early work studied the effect of the body on weaving, while her later work diverged from traditional weaving because of its effect on her body.

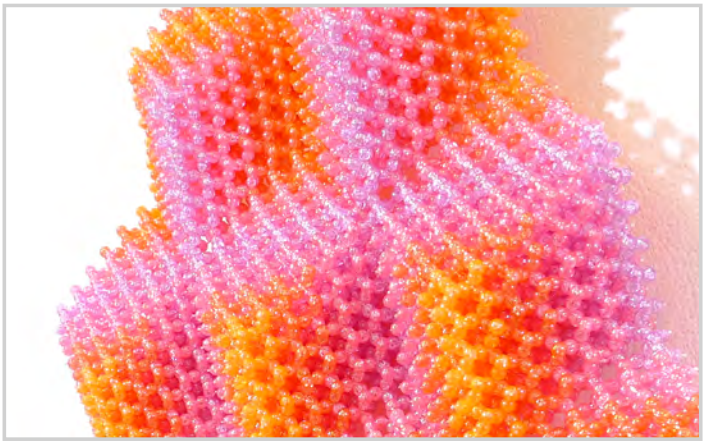
Experimenting at first with using party beads to create netlike forms, Dzioba developed a weaving process that allowed the structure to build upon itself to become flexible three-dimensional sculptures. The turquoise, fuchsia, purple, and orange nets layered in *Polychrome* (2022) provide insight into the twisting method Dzioba developed. There is no material connecting the pieces besides the beaded strands: no glue, no thread, no wire.

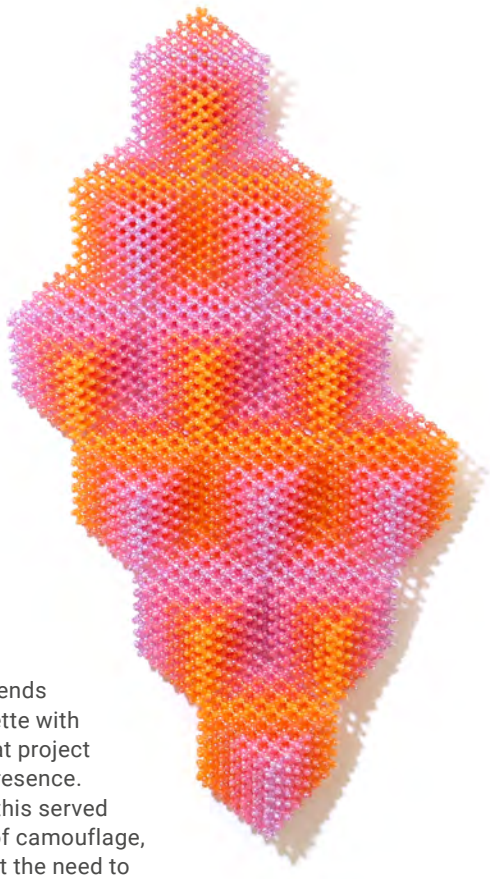
Dzioba learned the groundwork for this three-dimensional weaving technique while working at a textile mill after she graduated from the university. The mill manufactured vintage upholstery fabric replicas and industrial felt. Working with complex and large textile structures inspired her to think about different concepts in woven textiles. She applies this knowledge to make weavings with adapted woven structures, similar to the industrial felt produced at the mill, where the warp and weft layer to build in three dimensions.

For her sculptures, Dzioba uses different weaving structures, from the open-square weave in *Polychrome* to the denser weave of *Infrared* (2022). She works with shallow reliefs to be mindful of the weight as the layers build. The orange, fuchsia, and pink iridescent beads of *Infrared* are woven into interconnected cubes that collapse into rhomboids as gravity and their own weight distorts their form. The resulting shape is reminiscent of a three-dimensional Penrose

Left:
Shift, 2022
Party beads
55 x 10 x 1 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Right:
Hatfield, 2021
Party beads
23 x 23 x 2 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist





Infrared (with detail), 2022
Party beads
29 x 15 x 3 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

tile pattern. Physical realities aside, the bright, reflective colors transmit a sense of their buoyancy—when these works are handled, the surprising flexibility of the structure is delightful.

Dzioba's sculptures are a playful mash-up of geometric, minimal forms with color choices that cast disco vibes. Since she works with mass-produced beads, she doesn't have control over her color palette; she resists the toxicity that would be involved if she dyed her own beads. But she also appreciates the ability to use the material as it is, without alteration. Her ability to find, organize, and blend interesting color stories together is impressive. In *Shift* (2022), the rectangle weaving hangs askew, allowing unwoven strands to cascade in a vertical waterfall of twelve, untraditional rainbow colors, slightly off but perfectly balanced.

Given that she'd previously developed an allergic reaction to her materials, Dzioba is concerned about the way the party beads are manufactured. The plastic used to create this type of beaded strand includes materials from recycled computer parts. In the American South, after Mardi Gras, the beads can be found in waterways and on the streets, where they leach minute amounts of noxious metals into the water and soil. Fortunately there are initiatives throughout the South to recycle the beads, like Arc of Greater New Orleans (arcgnobeads.org), which takes millions of beads out of the waste stream and provides jobs to people with intellectual disabilities. For her own practice, Dzioba has turned to beads made of higher-grade plastics that are compliant with established safety guidelines.

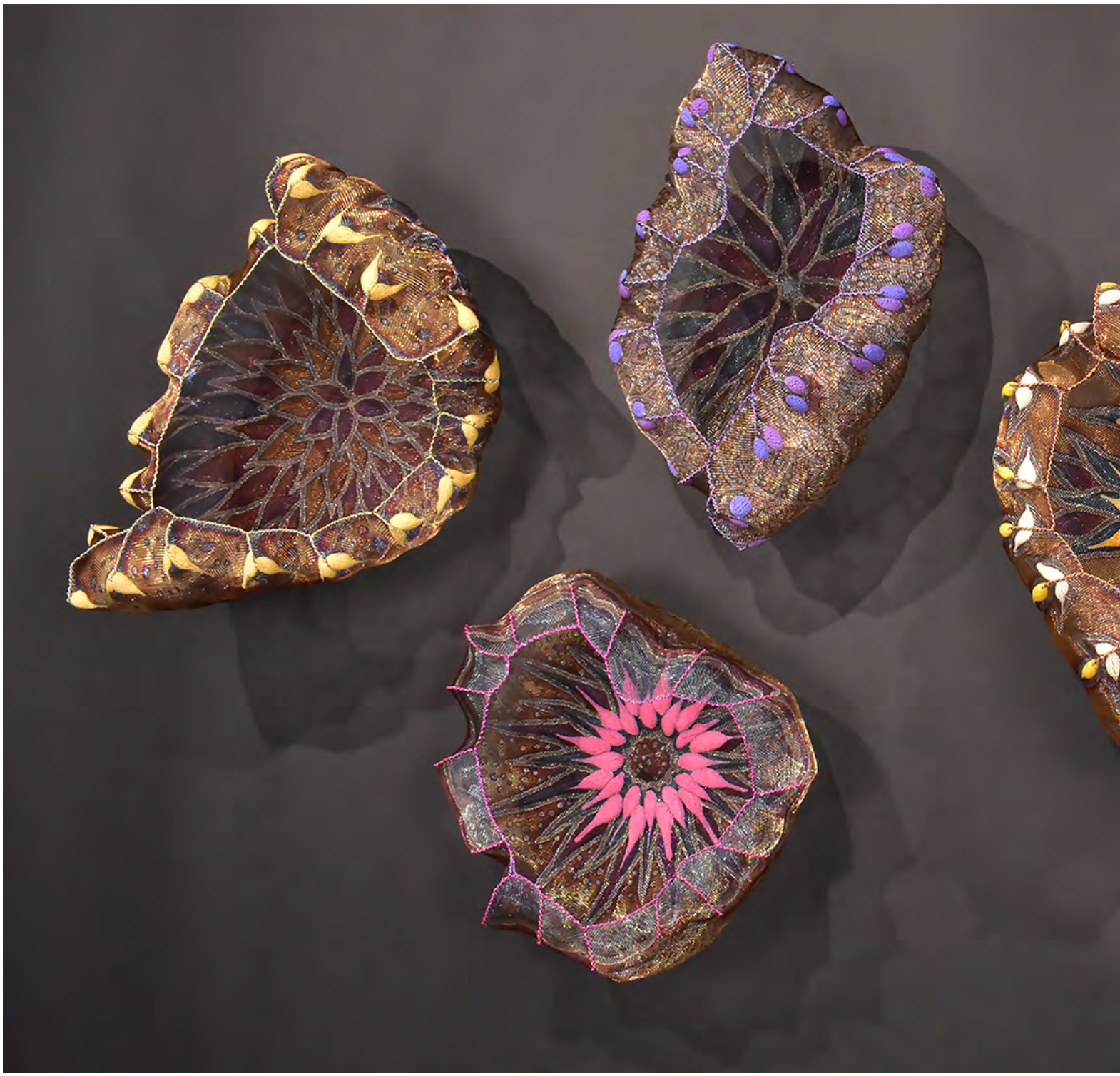
In 2022, Dzioba completed a three-month residency at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. The dedicated space provided her time to consider the way the layers of her identity show up in her work. She shares:

> For so long I had formed an aesthetic identity for myself, and consequently my work, that operated in opposition to the limited range of expression offered to me as a fat person. Based on personal history I'd come to associate vibrant colors and loud gestures with the high-femme camouflage historically offered to fat women by the fashion industry. In my current body of work, I've been able to embrace a visual vocabulary that is more authentic to myself and the material culture of my environment.

Her earlier work tends toward a muted palette with restrained colors that project a quiet and subtle presence. Perhaps for Dzioba this served as a different form of camouflage, her response against the need to use visual noise to mitigate how her physical body takes up space in the world.

Given that Dzioba identifies as fat and nonbinary, her transformation of garish, common materials into elegant, minimal forms questions the binary strictures that ruled her early art-making: loud/quiet, gay/straight, male/female, minimal/maximal, and fat/thin. In utilizing traditional textile mapping to weave unorthodox materials, she revels in the way her work doesn't quite fit. She embraces vibrant color yet constrains it within rigid, geometric shapes that somehow remain flexible. By bringing disparity together, Dzioba finds comfort in what some might see as a disunion. Her work corrects the dichotomy between divergent ideas—materials, forms, and beings—inviting the viewer to wonder why there was a divide between them in the first place.

This is a multipart series celebrating artists whose practices illustrate *jewelry thinking*. These artists may or may not have a background in jewelry, but their work exhibits qualities that jewelry artists will recognize, including commitment to materiality, respect of process, and focus on the body.



LANNY BERGNER

MESHING ABOUT

By D Wood

Flora Meshell #6, 2020
Stainless steel mesh, wire, silicone
19 x 14 x 8 in.
Private collection
Photo courtesy of the artist

Previous spread:
Flora Meshell grouping, 2019
Stainless steel mesh, wire, silicone
70 in. wide
Photo courtesy of the artist

The collection of the British Museum provides a glimpse into the history of metalworking. Artisans dating from 2600 to 2300 BCE crafted a silver vessel covered in woven metal wires that form a net bag for hanging or carrying. This piece was unearthed from the Royal Cemetery at Ur in southern Iraq. Other sources show that in seventeenth-century England wireworkers made bird cages and lattice for windows. A Royal Charter for "The Trade Arte and Mistery of Tynne Plate Workers als [alias] Wyer Workers of the City of London" was granted in 1670.[1] By the early nineteenth century, prompted by the invention of steam-driven textile looms and the need for mesh screening for the production of paper, James Locker was responsible for the first automated wire-weaving loom.[2]

On this side of the Atlantic, Hamilton L. Lindsay secured a patent for an automatic power loom for weaving metal in 1902, and established the Lindsay Wire Weaving Company in Cleveland in 1903.[3] The Niagara Wire Weaving Company was established in 1919, in Niagara Falls, Canada; by the 1930s it was the biggest manufacturer of pulp and paper mill wire cloth in the country.[4] And though the paper-making industry switched to plastic mesh in the 1960s, wire mesh is still used for filtration and screening in food manufacturing and petrochemical, pharmaceutical, and mining processes, as well as being embedded in various materials. You can also find it as insect screening in your local hardware store, which is where Lanny Bergner bought his first sheet in 1982.

Bergner was in graduate school and needed a see-through material, apart from fabric, that would span a bed frame. He "thought about aluminum window-screening"[5]—and thereby launched the career of an artist who, despite being part of a material heritage that dates back 5,000 years, is unknown in the metals community. His experience explains why this is the case, as do prevailing misconceptions about who does what.

Brass tacks

Lanny Bergner was born and raised in Anacortes, Washington, known for its primary industries of fishing and logging. His father worked in a plywood factory; his mother was a homemaker for four boys, Lanny being the youngest. He was introverted and spent his school days mostly trying not to be noticed, although he started a rock and roll band and hung out with the musicians. His high school English teacher recognized a creative bent in the shy lad and introduced him to her husband, Philip McCracken (1928–2021). McCracken was a visual artist who frequently took on apprentices to help in his studio. When Bergner visited McCracken and learned about the possibility of being McCracken's assistant, he knew that was something he wanted to do. But the US government put the idea on hold.

"The Vietnam War was going on and my draft number was 'one' that year," Bergner shares. "So I ended up joining the Air Force." Bergner chose to be an aircraft mechanic, and was able to travel. He served two three-month stints in Okinawa and a year in Thailand. Anticipating spare time during one of his Okinawa tours, he took materials and tools with which to make stained glass windows and subsequently shipped them to Anacortes. His four years of military service was positive: "It was an interesting experience and I don't regret being in the Air Force. It paid for my education with the GI Bill."

> "[McCracken] taught me a lot about the craft of making art. He was a sculptor … but his work had a good sense of craft and workmanship. And I responded to that."

When Bergner was honorably discharged, he returned to the West Coast and apprenticed with Phil McCracken for five months. Bergner says: "That was my first real training in art and sculpture. I lived in a little cabin by the [McCrackens'] house for the first part and, at the end, I was living in the house with them. I was at the studio every day with Phil. He taught me a lot about the craft of making art. He was a sculptor—wood carving, stone carving, plaster molds—but his work had a good sense of craft and workmanship. And I responded to that." Subsequently Bergner enrolled in the sculpture program at the University of Washington and graduated with a BFA in 1981.

Life in the Universe, 2014
Installation view at Anchor Art Space, Anacortes, WA
Stainless steel mesh, steel bar stock
72 x 48 x 144 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Silver lining

The aforementioned bed project that launched Bergner's interest in wire mesh occurred while he was attending art school at Tyler (Temple University) in Philadelphia (1981–1983). He made an iron bed frame with square cross-section posts, menacing-looking vertical rods surrounding the mattress area, and an arched headboard. The black bed structure contrasted starkly with the shiny and gossamer mesh stretched across the frame. Mesh, however, was not a straightforward solution. "I could only get a 36-inch width piece and this needed to be five feet. So I thought, how can I make this into five feet? Well, it's metal so it could be connected, twisted together. I found flat-nosed pliers and frayed off some of the material and twisted it together."

The bed also needed pillows and, once the mesh's qualities were apparent, the pillow forms, placed at the head of the bed, added to the artist's intention for the contrasts of solidity and delicacy, reality and dream, dark and light. The appeal of an inexpensive material, a small and readily-available assortment of tools, and minimal space requirements, in addition to a simple hands-on process, were hard to beat. Thus, a problem solved with wire mesh and its twisting launched Bergner into a mode of expression that has lasted close to forty years.

Concurrently, Bergner's years in grad school had another influence. He says: "Tyler had a really good fiber program and I was actually more interested in the people doing fiber work than I was in those doing sculpture. Adela Akers was the teacher and she was on my advisory committee. I really responded to what they were doing—exciting work, more interesting than the sculpture." The fiber students appreciated Bergner's work to the degree that, when the Milwaukee Art Museum sent out an invitation to participate in *Fiber R/Evolution* in 1985, he thought, "I'll give it a shot." His submission successfully passed the jury selection process, including a studio visit, and his inclusion in the exhibition was a game changer. "The big names in the fiber world were in that show. And the up-and-comers. Afterwards I kept being invited to fiber exhibitions so that's why I've never had a whole lot to do with the metal world even though I work with metal."

Nerves of steel

After graduation from Tyler, Bergner remained in Philadelphia. His teaching assistantship at the Stella Elkins Tyler Gallery, where he learned gallery preparation, qualified him to be hired at the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History. After six months he moved on to the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies (Historical Society of Pennsylvania) where he was the exhibition designer and preparator for a couple of years. His final job in Philadelphia was at the Fleisher Art Memorial. He worked there for eight years as the gallery coordinator. The advantage of this employment was that it was four days a week, permitting Bergner to spend time on his artwork. His mesh sculptural forms were shown at the Marian Locks Gallery (now Locks Gallery), a high-end fine art purveyor. After eight years at Fleisher, in 1994 Bergner and his wife, Eve, who was an administrative assistant at Fleisher, returned to Anacortes.[6]

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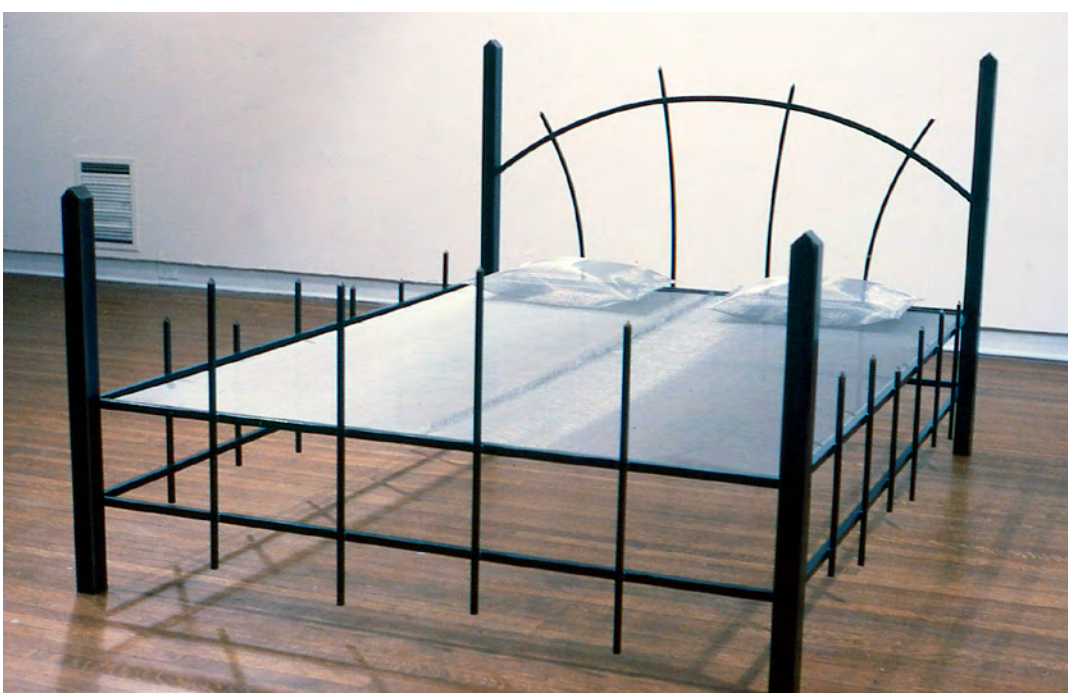
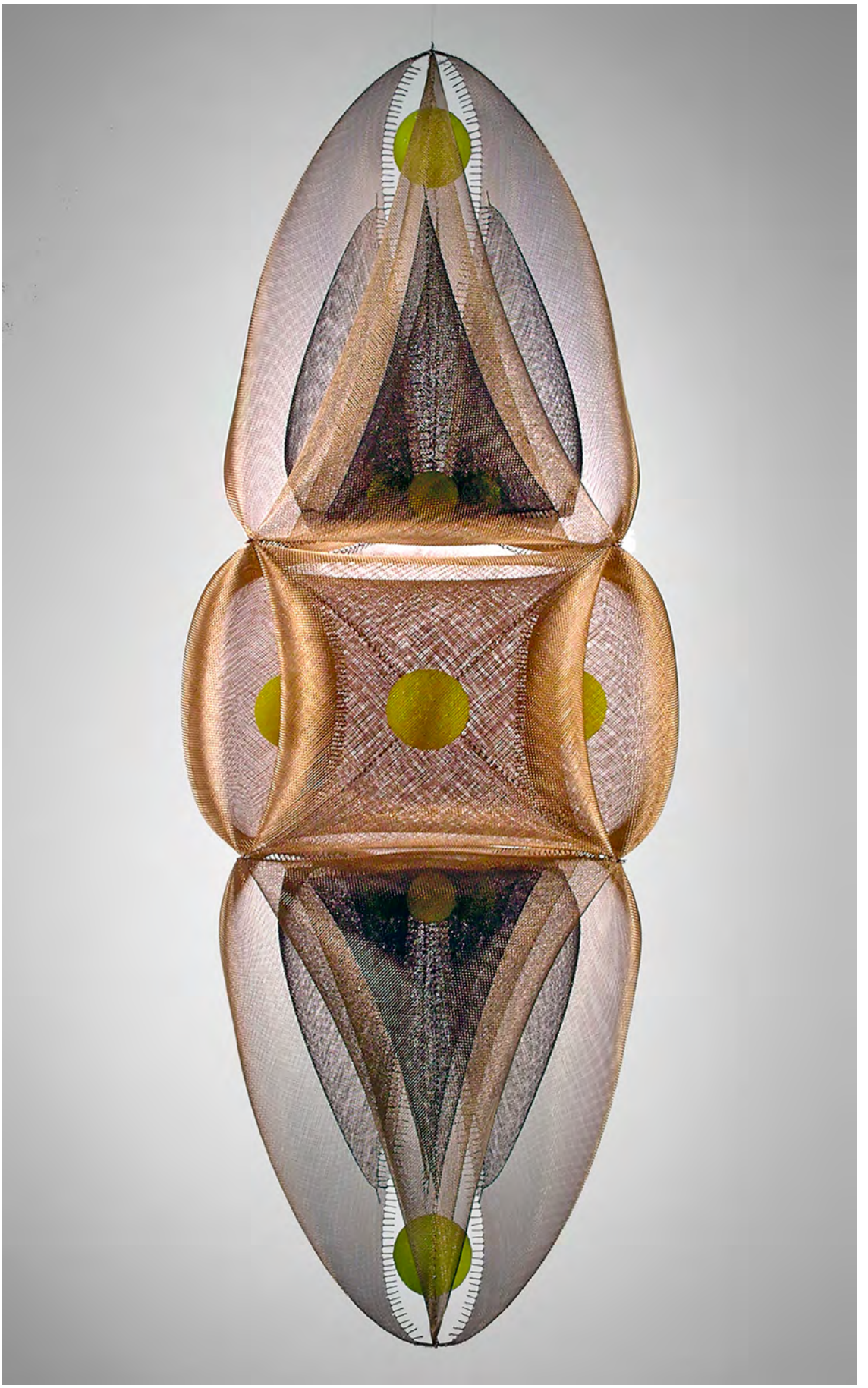
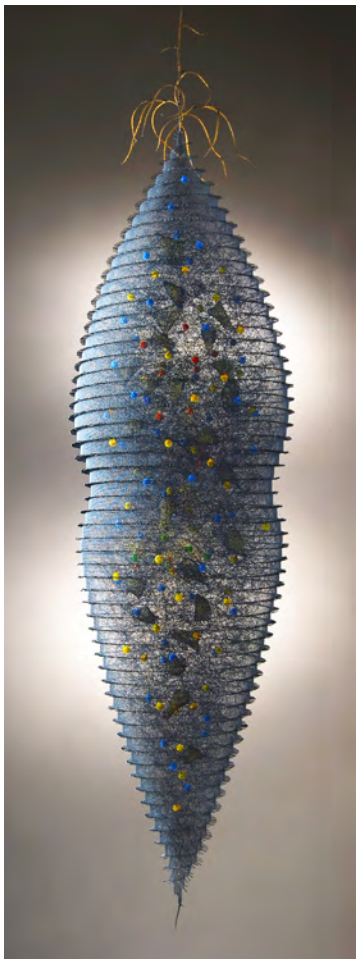
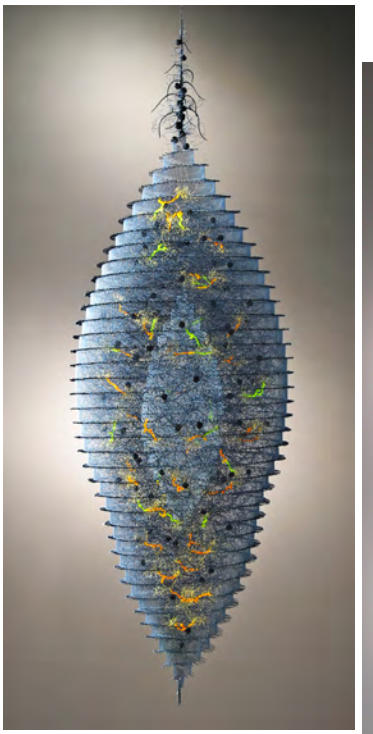


Bed, 1982
Steel, aluminum mesh
50 x 60 x 72 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist



Folding Space, 2004
Bronze and aluminum mesh, wire, glass frit
45 x 15 x 15 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist





Left to right:

Rising and Falling, 2006
Aluminum mesh, wire, glass frit
60 x 13 x 13 in.
Private collection
Photo courtesy of the artist

Fruitfully Red, 2007
Bronze mesh, brass wire, glass frit
42 x 10½ x 10½ in.
Private collection
Photo courtesy of the artist

Symbiote Electric 2, 2006
Aluminum mesh, black sand, wire, monofilament
46 x 12½ x 12½ in.
Promised donation to the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, Bainbridge, WA
Photo courtesy of the artist

Celestial Body, 2005
Bronze, brass, and aluminum mesh and wire
63 x 15 in.
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
Photo courtesy of the artist

Bergner's propensity for mesh gradually enabled him to take advantage of a range of metals—stainless steel, bronze, brass, copper, aluminum. The proximity of a manufacturer of woven mesh—Edward J. Darby and Son, established in 1854 in Philadelphia—facilitated his practice; the relationship with Darby continues to this day. Purchases of rolls of mesh led to vessels in various sizes, suspended and standing forms, installations, and wall-mounted murals. Typical of this work was *Symbiote Electric 2*: "The outer shell was made of strips of charcoal aluminum mesh connected together to form a continuous spiral. Inside was another form, made the same way as the outer shell, of plain aluminum mesh. Knotted lime green and orange monofilament along with strands of brass wire formed the irregular bits of color surrounding the inner core. Small spheres of black sand and strands of wire were glued together with black silicone. The spheres and knotted filament bits were packed inside the outer shell and held in suspension by loose strands of wire."

When the Bergners moved back to the West Coast, Lanny still had to supplement his income. "All I knew was I wanted to build a house and studio on property that I owned. I didn't really have any notion of what I'd do other than that I wanted to continue my art. For a few years I was doing yard work and odd jobs." Alongside the house-building and laboring, art-making and its presentation continued until 2003 when Bergner was diagnosed with cancer. As a consequence he didn't do anything for about three months, allowing time for recovery, contemplation, and the enjoyment of nature, which has been a significant influence throughout his life. Bergner reflects: "When I came out of that experience I thought, how long do I have left? I decided that I might as well do what I want to do. And from that point on I've just done my artwork. That was the impetus to re-evaluate my life."

The decision to do what he wanted was propitious: "Everything took off at that point." Coincidentally and fortuitously, Bergner's sculpture was picked up by the Snyderman-Works Galleries in Philadelphia. Snyderman-Works was a fine-craft gallery, which suited Bergner's portfolio. The gallery had a booth at SOFA Chicago to which it took its stable of artists, including Bergner. This long-standing relationship extended until 2017, when the Snydermans sold their gallery's building to focus on their business as art consultants.

"When I came out of that experience I thought, how long do I have left?

I decided that I might as well do what I want to do. And from that point on I've just done my artwork.

That was the impetus to re-evaluate my life."

Copper-bottomed

Bergner's entrée into and acceptance by the fiber community didn't allow him to rest on his laurels. He began to experiment with changing the color of the mesh by means of a butane or propane torch, as shown in *Amoeba Gathering*. Familiarity with the temperature of the torch allowed control over the tone of the metal. After cooling he pressed silicone, to which powdered pigment had been added, into the mesh (e.g., *Onion Top Vessel*) or attached painted balls embellished with glass frit. Bergner purchases jars of stained glass frit in a rainbow of colors that he affixes with silicone to polystyrene balls. He teaches processes like these to students in workshops, for instance at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee.

For the past couple of years Bergner has been exploring leaf and insect-wing forms. He says: "I tend to work in series. I'll get on to something then one thing will lead to another, but it's usually within a certain imagery." Leaves like elm, maple, oak, and ginkgo—"I like the shapes and how they go from the young growth, to the mature growth, to falling, then decay"—lend themselves to manipulation of copper mesh. *Cicada Wing* and *Dragonfly Wing* show interpretations of iridescence and translucency by means of heat on stainless steel mesh and concave and convex shapes. He stresses the veining, which is achieved by a felt-tip pen whose marks burn away during torching yet magically come back. Not satisfied with suspending the wings or displaying them against a wall, Bergner has started "creating different forms out of the wings rather than just [doing] the wing itself." He sews the wing panels into a vessel or collages the wings within a frame.

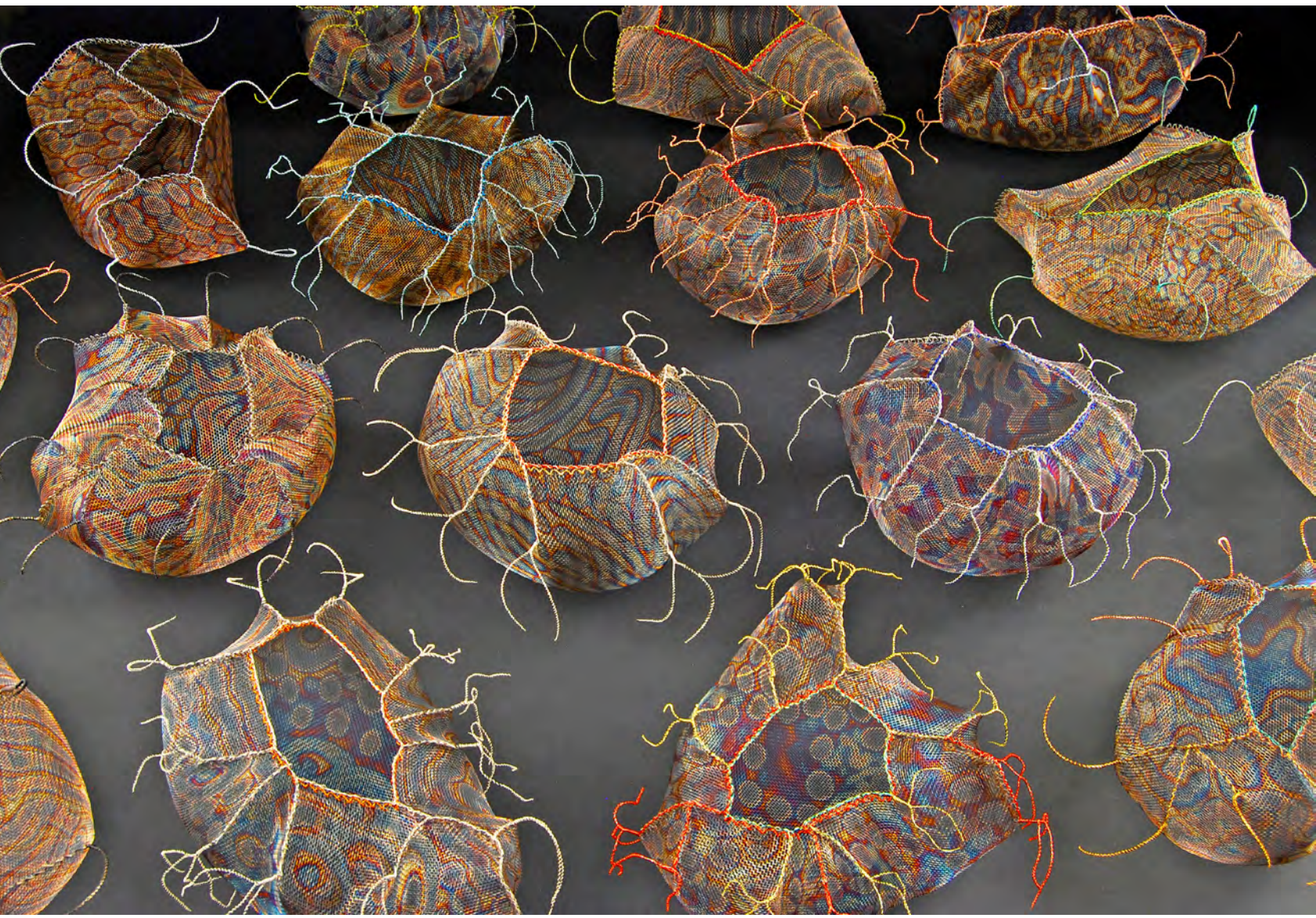
Bergner's work is ever-evolving despite its low-tech hand-manipulated process. As new discoveries are made, older pieces are revisited and updated—thereby being labeled "finished," whereas they were previously not quite. For instance, *Seeking Nature's Balance* existed without its tumbling copper leaves and golden glass frit balls until it was updated for the 2021 exhibition *Wings and Leaves* at the i.e. gallery in Edison, Washington.

Onion Top Vessel, 2014
Stainless steel mesh, wire, silicone
26 x 13 x 13 in.
Photo courtesy of KP Studios

Heavy metal

An outsider can speculate on the influences on an artist's work. For instance, Lanny remembers his mother being the crafter in the Bergner household: she did rug hooking and was a prolific crocheter. Rug hooking uses canvas mesh as a base, and crochet creates a mesh. Were those meshes unconsciously embedded in the future artist's mind? Bergner knows that he definitely inherited his mother's nervous energy. "I didn't really realize, but after going through school and my education in sculpture I finally recognized that what I liked most was the focused activity and repetitive process. And this is what I inherited from my mother. I need it as a meditative activity. It keeps everything a little more balanced."

Recognition of an affinity with the feminine, for an affirmed heterosexual male, arose early. "At the University of Washington, I was heavy into bronze casting. What I didn't like was the teacher, who was into the macho aspect of metal casting. As soon as you started doing something else, he didn't respond to it. He was just



Amoeba Gathering, 2011
Stainless steel mesh, wire
Various dimensions
Photo courtesy of the artist

into the 'hot metal men' type of thing, a macho world which just does not appeal to me." Once Bergner found his niche with metal mesh, he was no longer confronted by perceived male artistic norms. "I've been open to what comes my way and rather than go, 'I'm a guy, I don't know if I want to be in this fiber world.' It just didn't bother me. I was free enough in my head that I could look into the more feminine aspects and go there rather than not allowing myself to go there. I'm glad I did that over the years."

Lanny Bergner's occupational ancestors, namely The Worshipful Company of Tin Plate Workers Alias Wire Workers of the City of London mentioned earlier, are still functioning. Their motto, *Amore Sitis Uniti*, means "United in Love." It is likely that the male-dominated company—the first female master was appointed in 2021[7]—intends its motto to indicate brotherly love. Yet for Lanny Bergner, wire worker, uniting mesh is a labor of love, and represents a passion for handcrafting and devotion to the intricacies of nature.

1 https://tinplateworkers.co.uk. / **2** https://www.lockergroup.com/history/history-of-wire-weaving. / **3** https://patentimages.storage.googleapis.com/cf/44/2b/18d0d38763b795/US712817.pdf; https://case.edu/ech/articles/l/lindsay-wire-weaving-co. / **4** https://nfexchange.ca/museum/discover-our-history/history-notes/niagara-wire-weaving-company. / **5** All quotations are from Zoom interviews with the author, October 14 and 16, 2022. / **6** Eve Deisher Bergner, an artist and art educator, died of lung cancer in 2017. Lanny remarried in 2022. / **7** https://tinplateworkers.co.uk/installation-of-the-companys-first-lady-master.

Uniting mesh is a labor of love, and represents a passion for handcrafting and devotion to the intricacies of nature.

Seeking Nature's Balance, 2021
Stainless steel and copper mesh, wire, glass frit
48 x 13 x 13 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Lanny Bergner beside *Deep in the Primal Abyss.*

Photo: Nancy Wright

JEWELRY FOR BODILY AUTONOMY

Plan B Art Project

BY KATIE GRIFFITH

In May 2022, jewelry artists came together in peaceful but powerful protest to defend a person's right to bodily autonomy. The *Plan B Art Project*, curated by Shauna Burke, debuted in Waltham, Massachusetts, at the Monique Rancourt Artisan Gallery.

It has since toured eight cities, including Cincinnati, Ohio; Providence, Rhode Island, at the SNAG Conference; and Manhattan, New York, at NYC Jewelry Week.

On June 18, 2022, just days before the Supreme Court officially reversed *Roe v. Wade*, the *Plan B Art Project* opened in Cincinnati at Ombré Gallery.

The public gathered solemnly in light of the exhibit's mission, sparking meaningful dialogue about reproductive rights.

The necessity of constructive and respectful conversation surrounding the issue of reproductive rights became imperative with the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. The overturn eliminated the constitutional right to abortion and authorized legislation on a state-by-state basis. It also unfortunately misconstrued the issue as being abortion-centric. Dialogue surrounding the controversy should highlight *every* aspect of a woman's safety and health, like the implications of maternal sepsis, or a pregnancy resulting from rape. Instead, the superficial "pro-life versus pro-choice" argument prevailed—which means that, in a lot of instances, real-life circumstances and the threat to women's well-being will be ignored. The *Plan B Art Project* set out to reignite the conversation by employing jewelry.

Burke shared the following in a phone conversation in October 2022:

> What art does is it invites conversation. And I think it's actually a very safe place to invite conversation, because nothing is cut-and-dried when looking at art. And it's physical. You can touch it. That's one of the things that differentiates [jewelry] from fine art. It's wearable, it's touchable, it's something that's sort of seen as being a working-class material—so you can have these conversations about it. And we are in a moment in society where conversations need to be had.

Previous spread, left:
Rebecca Strzelec
Gross, 2022
3D-printed ABS plastic, epoxy coated stainless ball chain
2 x 1½ in. (excluding chain)
Photo: Cole Rodger

Previous spread, right:
Biba Schutz
Blooming, 2022
Sterling silver
2 x 1½ x ¾ in. with 18 in. chain
Photo: Cole Rodger

Left:
Krista Bermeo
Plan B Earrings, 2022
Sterling silver, glass
2 in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Right:
Plan B exhibition at Ombré Gallery, 2022.

Photos: Katie Griffith

With each purchase from the *Plan B Art Project,* an individual piece goes out into the world, representing the project's message, spinning webs of conversation, and circulating opportunities for understanding. There's also a tangible impact. Both the artists and galleries have pledged at least 25 percent of proceeds to a local Planned Parenthood. Currently, the project has fulfilled $7,000 of its $20,000 goal.

Given that Planned Parenthood has been so underfunded and mistakenly synonymized with abortion, Burke noted the importance of gallerists donating to a local clinic of their choosing. "In fact, Planned Parenthood helps with gynecological and obstetrical issues," Burke says. "People look at Planned Parenthood as just being for abortion, and it's not."

According to Planned Parenthood's website, donations make the fight for reproductive health and rights possible and support patients who rely on the health centers for critical health care.

The threat to women's reproductive rights materialized in Burke a profound urge to combat the movement. She grew up with a feminist mom and often marched in protest for equal bodily autonomy, she recalls. As an adult, at thirty-one weeks' pregnant, Burke was diagnosed with HELLP syndrome, a life-threatening pregnancy complication that required an emergency Cesarean section. The procedure saved her and her child's life, she says.

Keen to the winds leading up to the overturn of the contested ruling, Burke

decided in 2022 that she wanted to curate an art project to contribute to the conversation. A goldsmith and professor at the Pratt Institute, Burke reached out to colleagues, gallerists, and jewelry artists, initially recruiting twenty jewelers to participate. In an effort to curate a cohesive body of work that allows artists to express ideas and style individually, Burke tasked each artist to allow the amphora form to inspire or appear in their designs.

The amphora is an ancient vessel that held and transported liquids and dry goods.

"You can have conversations about [jewelry]. And we are in a moment in society where conversations need to be had."

It also symbolizes vintage pharmaceutical bottles that sometimes held abortifacient herbs and poisons.

"I just started talking to other artists about it," Burke says. "Like how could we, in our own way, have our own protest? And it started there, with using amphora forms that I had cast, with this nod to 'What did women do before *Roe v. Wade*?' And a common form of [self-managed] abortion was using herbs or poisons. These little jars I was looking at as Roman amphora forms, which themselves held herbs or poisons or were old-fashioned apothecary jars. The project just sort of exploded. People really wanted to take part. And they wanted to take part with their own interpretation of the project and women's rights or person's rights to bodily autonomy. Now we are up to over seventy artists."

Four types of silver amphora forms were offered, each no bigger than two inches. Artists chose to either incorporate the precast forms or create their own interpretation of the amphora. Considering the scope of multidisciplinary work and artists, an even amount of both options has been utilized. The methods, materials, and interpretations, however, are as diverse and impressive as are the artists who created them.

Opposite, far left:
Liaung-Chung Yen
As She Wishes, 2022
Silver, 18k yellow gold, garnet, locking pin stem on back
4 x 4 x ½ in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Opposite:
Yuri Tozuka
Unite!, 2022
Sterling silver, 22k gold
1¾ in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Above:
Krista Bermeo
Blown Glass Vessel (Plan B Then), 2022
Blown glass, oxidized sterling silver, titanium
3¼ x ¾ in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Left, from top:
Steve Alexis
Sovereign Symbol II, 2022
Thermoplastic, mica, labradorite
4 x 2 in. with 22 in. necklace
Photo: Cole Rodger

Trecy Bleich
Plan B Vessel, 2022
Miyuki glass, electroplated hematite, 14k gold filled
2½ in. with 18 in. chain
Photo: Cole Rodger

Shauna Blythe Burke
Clipped Wing, 2022
Carved intaglio quartz, sterling silver, 18k gold, rubies, garnet
20 in. long
Photo: Cole Rodger

Above:
Boris Bally
Ovary Act, 2022
Sterling silver, ruby, rubber necklace
3¼ x 3¼ x 1 in. (without rubber necklace)
Photo: Cole Rodger

Right:
Cindy Liebel
Liberate, 2022
Sterling silver, 14k gold, garnets, white sapphires
1½ in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Burke says she was moved by the number of artists willing and eager to participate and is proud to host such a varied group. The artists embody a wide range of perspectives and ages; some artists lived through a time where abortion was illegal, and others were born into a post-*Roe* world. Men, women, nonbinary people, and people of various races and ethnicities participated in the exhibition.

"I've got people who are recent college grads and people well into their seventies making work," Burke says. "The artists are from all over the US, and two artists from overseas are making work and contributing. We have a little bit of everyone in this show. This is not something that's affecting just women, it's affecting everyone."

Rebecca Strzelec, professor of Visual Arts and head of Visual Art Studies at Penn State Altoona, designed a collection of 144 necklaces titled *Gross*. Each necklace is a 3D-printed amphora made of ABS (Acrylonitrile butadiene styrene) plastic. In the exhibit twelve amphora are displayed in twelve egg cartons, but each necklace is sold separately. They come in red, purple, or blue iterations and represent those forced into pregnancy or unsafe situations. Strzelec pledged 100 percent of sales to Planned Parenthood.

Jewelry designer and glass artist Krista Bermeo contributed wire-hanger-shaped earrings. The silver or titanium constructions appear in the shape of wire hangers with dangling red glass drops. Bermeo also contributed *Plan B Then . . .*, a glass-blown pendant on a necklace. It's a larger, more complex design that replicates the hanger inside a deep red and orange fluid shape. Despite its warm palette, the necklace evokes sorrow and longing.

It is a panoramic collection, encompassing countless methods of jewelry-making and offering styles to complement any taste. Artists have carefully poured thought and emotion into their interpretations and titles. Some titles are soft and majestic, like Melinda Risk's *Winged Tear Collector* or Liaung Chung Yen's *As She Wishes,* while others are terse and grave, like Lynn Latta's *Caged* or Jessica Armstrong's *Unexpected*. Yuri Tozuka's *Unite!* is a statement ring. In a fusion of shape and power, gold and silver hands support an elevated, clenched fist—all following the amphora form.

New York artist and jeweler Biba Schutz's graceful yet striking necklace, *Blooming*, is a hand-fabricated and cast monochromatic bouquet of flowering shades of silver and gray from a dark vessel. In a phone conversation in October 2022, Schutz said that her work is not typically outwardly political, so an opportunity like this brought a new challenge to her studio practice.

Schutz says her work is usually bold but a delicate approach felt natural. When conceptualizing, Schutz recalls feeling shy but infuriated. "I'm so angry I didn't really know how to express my anger. So I tried to bring beauty into it, but there's nothing beautiful about this issue. It's ugly and nasty and wrong, but I tried to bring beauty into it." *Blooming* provides a solitary

The artists embody a wide range of perspectives and ages; some artists lived through a time where abortion was illegal, and others were born into a post-*Roe* world. Men, women, nonbinary people, and people of various races and ethnicities participated in the exhibition.

"We have a little bit of everyone in this show. This is not something that's affecting just women, it's affecting everyone."

space for healing, grieving, and processing a response. Schutz is currently working on a second contribution to the project.

In April and May, Thomas Mann's Gallery I/O is slated to host the *Plan B Art Project*. Mann says he looks forward to constructing a custom display for it. Typically he will design a display for individual shows and his team will execute the construction.

"As a gallerist, I will have to look at everything to make sure I know how we can accommodate it in the best way," Mann says. "Gallery I/O has always been very progressive in its thinking and its portrayal of work."

"Anything we can do to put this in the face of America and defend women's right to be in charge of their own decisions about their bodies. It's not only about the personal impact, it's about the cultural, political, and social impact," Mann told *Metalsmith* in a phone conversation in October 2022.

Mann's *Vessel* is a distinct brooch or necklace pendant of carved Micarta and acrylics, bronze, steel, silver, and found

objects. Mann used the amphora form as a canvas to which he mingled well-balanced shapes, material, and color, leaving much to be inferred. At the mouth of the form is a strip of flecked, sparkled acrylic that's mirrored in two other strips in the belly of the shape, one black and white and one rainbow stripes. His well-known "Techno-Romantic" style is apparent throughout; the centerpiece is a silhouetted woman with two hexagonal shapes on either side made of glow-in-the-dark acrylic and reminiscent of sunny-side-up eggs.

The *Plan B Art Project* is an evolving exhibit, continually welcoming new submissions and recurring submissions from participating artists. In June 2023, the project will visit the Robert Goodman Gallery in Zionsville, Indiana, then in August it will be hosted at the Salt Hill Gallery in Fargo, North Dakota. It will complete its tour in December at Gravers Lane Gallery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—and live online after that.

Burke shares: "What I've been super impressed about is that all of the galleries have been incredibly innovative on how they've been showing the work. Wherever it's traveled, people are interested, they are seeing it, they are buying it. I'm really proud of the galleries.... They are all small businesses. This could affect their business, it could have been dangerous for them. My heart is so full."

Far Left:
Sharon Massey
Desperate Times: Pennyroyal Tea, 2022
Steel, enamel, magnet
3 x 1¼ in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Left:
Lynn Latta
Caged, 2022
Sterling silver
2 x 2 x 1 in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Above:
Thomas Mann
Vessel, 2022
Carved micarta and acrylic, bronze, steel, silver, found objects
6 x 2¼ x ½ in.
Photo: Cole Rodger

Career Topographies

CONVERSATIONS IN THE MIDDLE

By Maya Kini

How do I begin again?

Through the enduring COVID-19 pandemic—as recurrent promises of an ending are broken—perhaps we've each asked ourselves this question several times. It is a question I began asking in the fall of 2019; I'd finished a year of cancer treatment and was reflecting on cycles of momentum building and busting in my own creative life.

At its best, disruption is an opportunity; at its worst, it is paralyzing. Mostly I found I lived between these two poles, in a world of uncertainty, in a new body with eyes trained on the present. I finished my fourth decade with a kindergartner and a middle schooler, a jewelry business and a partner, a home and a garden, and a host of relationships that needed tending.

I encountered the terrain of midlife and midcareer with the narrowed focus of illness and began to think of the ways in which the topography of disruption affects other women artists at the same conjunction of life and career.[1]

This article is built from my conversations with three artists: Kristin Mitsu Shiga, Raïssa Bump, and Amy Tavern. Each reached her forties having encountered significant challenges that reshaped both life and work; this piece spotlights how family and personal illnesses, moves, motherhood, and loss shape and hone their studio practice.

For each maker, having spent years developing both rigorous skills and creative voice, the challenge demanded the question: How to begin again?

From the top:

Kristin Mitsu Shiga
Photo courtesy of the artist

Raïssa Bump
Photo: Karen Santos

Amy Tavern
Photo courtesy of the artist

Previous spread:

Amy Tavern
Pacific Ocean May 6, 2019
Photo courtesy of the artist

Amy Tavern
Sand March 21, 2019
Photo courtesy of the artist

KRISTIN MITSU SHIGA

Mending

Kristin Mitsu Shiga was born with an undetected hole in her heart. By the time doctors in New York discovered the hole, it was the size of a quarter. At twenty-two, Shiga had open-heart surgery; after she healed, she threw a dart at a map and moved to where the dart had landed—Portland, Oregon—where she finished her degree in metalsmithing at Oregon College of Art and Craft. Invincibility is the dominant sentiment for many twentysomethings, but for Shiga, already versed in the fragility and brevity of life, this decade was a straight sail toward her dreams. She began building a multi-faceted life in the arts through teaching, working for other jewelers, and designing her own production lines.

I first met Shiga at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in the summer of 2004 when she was assisting Marcia Macdonald in a mixed-media workshop.[2] Her breadth of skills in the studio and the precision with which she approached her work were inspiring. Skilled at drawing, Shiga worked from sketches, making exactly what she had conceived in pencil into objects, which to my hands and eyes seemed like a magic trick.

At the time of that workshop, a new set of health issues had caught up with her: she had carpal tunnel and tendonitis in both arms. This challenge—and the attendant change in her capacities—is pivotal to how she now approaches teaching, which is as important to her as her studio practice:

> When I had the tendonitis, I realized that 90 percent of metalsmithing is about holding things, so I taught a class called "Hold Everything" about tips and tricks, jigs and tools like the Benchmate, which was just in its infancy at that time. All of these challenges have made me a better teacher.

In her midthirties Shiga experienced yet another set of health challenges: she survived cancer, a paralyzing stroke, and multiple cardiac ablations to correct dangerous arrhythmias most likely caused by the stress and toxicity of prolonged chemotherapy treatment. "My whole life, it's been *a way of life* to figure out how to pivot and balance, respond and adapt to whatever my abilities and resources are."

Kristin Mitsu Shiga
Unfinished, Damaged and Broken: Tiffany, 2009
Vintage ivory comb, sterling silver
8 x 2 x ¼ in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Kristin Mitsu Shiga
When There Is Nothing Left to Burn..., 2007
Sterling silver, Strike Anywhere matches
3 x 2 x ⅜ in. pendant, 22 in. chain
Photo: Courtney Frisse

"My whole life, it's been a *way of life* to figure out how to pivot and balance, respond and adapt to whatever my abilities and resources are."

Throughout four years of treatment for adenocarcinoma, Shiga cultivated a meditation practice, reflecting that "bench practice is the same as meditation practice in that you just have to show up. You come to the bench, you come to the cushion." Sometimes she drops right into the breath and away from the noise of the mind—what in creative practice is often called the "flow state." More often, she quietly coaxes the mind to quiet, by sweeping the studio, by cleaning and oiling tools, by drawing her attention back to the sensation of breath moving in and out of the lungs. All of this constitutes what Shiga considers her studio practice.

She also practices the Japanese art of kintsugi, or "golden joinery," using lacquer and powdered gold or platinum to mend broken objects. The repairs often take many hours and are themselves meditations on the nature of scars, what it means to break and repair, and how ritualized labor can help an artist process profound loss. For her first show after cancer treatment, Shiga invited her community to send her broken objects in need of repair, which became part of her 2007 series *Unfinished, Damaged and Broken*. She shares:

> What makes things that are no longer whole still recognizable? How many (and which?) elements need to be there before we know the name of a thing? With objects, it is obvious when loss has occurred, when something is missing or broken. But we are surrounded by people walking around with big chunks torn from them, and we never see it at all.

Kristin Mitsu Shiga
Unfinished, Damaged and Broken: Karen, John, Kazuko, Sue, Hanni & Shirl, 2005
Found ceramic plates, mild steel wire
8 x 8 x ¾ in. to 16 x 16 x 1 in.
Photo: Dan Kvitka

RAÏSSA BUMP

Beginner's Eyes

On a summer day in Portland, Oregon, Raïssa Bump and I wandered in the Ladd's Addition rose garden with Bump's daughter, who had just turned two. Amid a global pandemic that wrought havoc in countless lives, Bump became a mother and she and her husband—artist and furniture maker Jonathan Anzalone—uprooted their home and studio from San Francisco's Richmond District to be closer to family. The focus of Bump's days has shifted to caring for her daughter; it is a shift she hadn't consciously known was needed. Bump speaks from a place of curiosity about these myriad changes:

> I still feel I'm intensely in the middle of all the transitions, reorienting. Like I'm sitting in the middle of a lake on a raft and am surrounded by fog. Where's the shore? In this situation, there is no use paddling. As best I can, I'm embracing that it's a time of pause—a messy, confusing, dreamy, visioning time where it doesn't behoove me to make big professional decisions.

Raïssa Bump
Large Mica Spiral Net Brooch, 2022
Oxidized sterling silver, mirrored glass, mica, paper, copper
2¼ x 2¼ x ⅞ in.
Available at Sienna Patti Contemporary
Photo courtesy of Sienna Patti Contemporary

Bump grew up in the Hudson River Valley and graduated from Rhode Island School of Design in 2003. In the nearly twenty years since, she has been building her presence in the fields of jewelry and metalsmithing, working and exhibiting at Sienna Patti Contemporary gallery, teaching workshops at Haystack and Penland School of Craft, and chairing the board of Art Jewelry Forum. Bump also created Reset, a series of "self-tuning" movement practices designed to stabilize and strengthen the many muscles that jewelers and metalsmiths use and abuse in the making of objects.[3]

Reset represents the intersection of Bump's yoga and meditation practice with her studio practice. These are threads and chronologies that weave together. Bump, who is a certified yoga teacher, envisions the body as a physical tool, one that needs to be oiled, polished, and cared for. As we walked amid the roses, observing the world from a toddler's perspective, I got the feeling that motherhood is a new strand that Bump is working in. Small children keep us in the present moment, in what the body is experiencing now, asking us—their caregivers—to notice. Meditation and mindfulness practices draw us into these moments of noticing. I was struck by the similarities between my own time

At the root of Bump's work is the elusive state of beginner's eyes. She takes bits and pieces of past works and finds new ways to envision them and guide them toward completion.

A foggy, foamy, watery exploration. Raïssa Bump studio process snapshot, 2018.

Photo: Anna Gavrilov

Raïssa Bump
Single Ripple Mirror Brooch, 2018
Sterling silver, mirror, mica, silver and copper-lined crystal beads
1 x 2½ x ¼ in.
Available at Sienna Patti Contemporary
Photo courtesy of Sienna Patti Contemporary

as a new mother and my cancer treatments—both had reset my navigation and asked me to reassess the routes I'd previously traveled. They returned me to a state of presence and connection to my body that most of the time is as inaccessible to me as the horizon is. But the flip side of intense presence with a dependent human is constant interruption—the enemy of creative flow.

Poet Adrienne Rich describes how "a certain freedom of the mind is needed—freedom to press on, to enter the currents of your thought like a glider pilot, knowing that your motion can be sustained, that the buoyancy of your attention will not be suddenly snatched away. Moreover, if the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at that moment."[4]

Right now, in her studio, Bump is learning how to work in short bursts, often engaging in a rhythmic or repetitive process before she goes on to ask questions of her materials, inviting the playfulness of "what if?" At the root of Bump's work is the elusive state of beginner's eyes. She takes bits and pieces of past works and finds new ways to envision them and guide them toward completion, seeing them again as if for the first time. The net in *Large Mica Spiral Net Brooch* is one such sample, created many years ago and returned to over the summer of 2022 as Bump found herself drawn to the concept of the spiral. In this piece, the artist uses spiral as process, circling from the center outward.

Bump recently taught an online workshop with Pocosin Arts School of Fine Craft called "The Resilient Studio: Honing Your Creative Practice & Sustainability Practices." The class grew from her own work to relearn what to say yes to and what to say no to within the framework of motherhood; the workshop is its own sort of reset for Bump and other makers within a wider community, all of whom are emerging from the pandemic with changed perspectives and practices. Of the workshop, Bump says, "It's not a space for me to transmit information outward but rather have a space for side-by-side learning and discovery, a space to resource each other and connect. It feels scary and vulnerable and unquestionably right. That makes me proud."

AMY TAVERN
Community

Amy Tavern and I met in 2009 when we were both Searchlight Artists at the American Craft Council's Baltimore show. She had just begun a three-year residency at Penland School of Craft and I had my eight-month-old firstborn strapped to my chest. She was beginning her *Graffiti* series in which she layered spray paint onto silver forms, sanding into them to expose layers of color. At Penland, Tavern lived within a supportive and engaged community, and made a living with one-of-a-kind and limited-edition jewelry while developing her teaching and lecturing style. I was exploring ways to work in the bits and pieces of the day when I wasn't caring for an infant. We were both emerging artists in our thirties.

Toward the end of her Penland residency—as she gathered creative and professional momentum—her father's Alzheimer's began to worsen, so Tavern moved to her hometown of Richfield Springs, New York, to help care for him. Witnessing her father losing everything to Alzheimer's was, Tavern describes, one of the most difficult periods of her life. Yet throughout that time, her studio practice remained strong and a source of comfort. In 2013, Tavern was awarded the NES Artist Residency in Skagaströnd, Iceland. It was there, amid a liminal landscape of sea and rock, that Tavern began shifting the topography of her life and career: after over a decade as a studio jeweler, she decided to pursue an MFA in sculpture and installation. During her residency, Tavern made *Island of 14,264*, a piece that mapped in embroidery knots the number of days the artist had lived. *Island* is both self-portrait and the beginnings of Tavern's meditation on time—as well as the consideration of the smaller part within a larger whole, an approach that she would later carry into her sculpture and installation work.

After her father passed, Tavern moved across the country to study sculpture at California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco. Opening new doors often involves closing others, and Tavern's commitment to working at a new scale in a new field demanded she say no to teaching opportunities, shows, and jewelry clients.

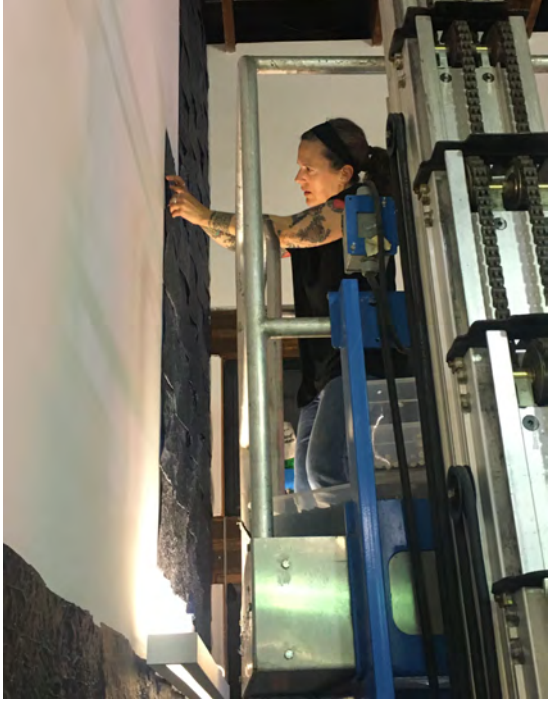
Her decision to step away from the field of jewelry was fraught:

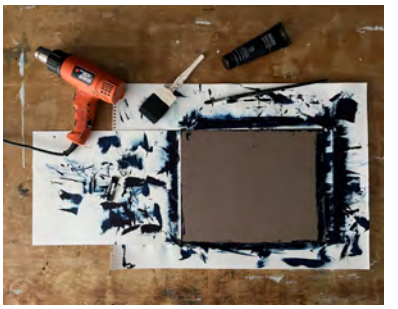
> My identity was so wrapped up in jewelry! I had never thought about my life without jewelry being the focus, and all of a sudden it wasn't going to be for an indefinite period of time. I made the choice to walk away from it because I knew in order to do what I had to do, I had to be separate from it.
>
> I know what to do with jewelry. That's not to say that I've mastered anything or that I'm done with it, but I had my voice with that material and I wanted to work with ideas and scale that I'd never done before.

One year into her MFA at CCA, Tavern created an installation entitled *Universe* made from painted sheets of vellum that the artist crinkled and crushed; distressing the smooth surface added depth and texture, and she

Amy Tavern
Island of 14,264 Days, 2013
Cotton, linen, wool thread on linen
12 x 7½ x ¼ in.
Photo: Hank Drew

Amy Tavern
Non Solus, 2022 (ongoing)
15,520 real and imitation pearls from 159 contributors, artist's own pearls, silk thread
11 x 8½ x 8 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist





Amy Tavern in a scissor lift during the installation of *Universe (Blue and Black)*, 2022.

Photo: Zoe Ani

Process photos 1–4, *Universe (Blue and Black)*, 2022.

Photos courtesy of the artist

could work at installation scale through the accretion of small individual elements. "Finally, I made something big enough," Tavern says of this piece, while still recognizing the jeweler's sensibility she brings to large-scale work.

Amy Tavern and I began our conversation about midcareer topography in early 2020, just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Not long before we met up, her ophthalmologist had discovered a brain tumor pressing on her optic nerve.

This was one of few moments in Tavern's life as an artist when she couldn't make work in the studio. Facing vision loss and the possibility of brain surgery to remove the tumor, Tavern was also contemplating a changed body and mind in the aftermath of treatment.[5] What she could do was walk, so she took daily walks on Ocean Beach on the far western side of San Francisco where she lives. Returning to the beach is similar to returning to the meditation cushion or the bench or the yoga mat—a commitment to noticing. Tavern shares photos from these walks on Instagram and published the book *Ocean* in 2021. The images often hover on the place where land meets sky, the glassy sand where a wave recedes, the clear gemlike bodies of jellyfish, the intricate structures of kelp holdfasts, and the places where sand has been shaped by water. When illness comes, we become students of that. We learn how to inhabit different bodies, how to see differently. Our calendars are directed by medical appointments, scans, and procedures. There is no right way to encounter illness. Only circuitous paths that we hope will lead us off the island.

Midway through her forties, with a full-time job and just one day in the studio, Tavern needed to direct all of her mental and emotional resources toward this singularly demanding subject: her tumor. She visualized her collection of atypical cells growing much like one of her sculptures: *Non Solus*. Tavern began *Non Solus* in 2015 while caring for her father. Made out of thousands of pearls sent to Tavern by her community, the sculpture is built in a similar manner to how pearls are formed—accretion, where layers of nacre are slowly built up around that first, irritating grain of sand. Tavern wrote in a blog post from 2015, "The participatory aspect of this piece makes it more compelling and personal. I like the idea of the materials coming from a myriad of sources, from places far and wide. They will bring beautiful, complex layers to the work and mimic the process of how a pearl itself forms." Tavern returned to this piece in 2021, as she underwent five weeks of radiation treatments to arrest the growth

When illness comes, we become students of that. We learn how to inhabit different bodies, how to see differently. Our calendars are directed by medical appointments, scans, and procedures. There is no right way to encounter illness. Only circuitous paths that we hope will lead us off the island.

Amy Tavern
Universe (Blue and Black), 2022
Vellum, paint
8–20 x 45 ft.
Photo: Graham Holoch

of her tumor. During that time, she added thousands of new pearls.

The work of stitching pearls onto *Non Solus* is intimate and quiet. One hand holds the form while the other adds the pearls and threads. It seemed a perfect accompaniment to the daily radiation treatments, the effects of which accumulate in the body. *Non Solus* means "not alone," and the piece acquired new layers of meaning during the pandemic, offering Tavern a way to ground herself in her work while connecting her to a larger community of pearl donors. The resulting "sculpture-in-progress" is a luminous, amorphous form that epitomizes slow growth.

At the intersection of life and one's creative practice, when life is no longer sprawling out ahead with promises of endless futurity, when the work of care—for our loved ones and for ourselves—demands time and attention, the artist pivots. Mountain analogies abound during middle age time: the sometimes-grueling climb, the confidence and hope that a stunning vista awaits—followed by the dread that we may have already reached the summit and are now steadily on the decline. It is here that David Brooks's image of the "second mountain" takes shape and represents a life and career beyond the initial ascent of the first mountain—while not discounting the lessons learned from the completed descent. If the term "midcareer" understands time chronologically—the stuff of calendars and résumés—each of these artists is engaged with time in its other sense, which the ancient Greeks understood as *kairos:* "the uniquely timely, the spontaneous, the radically particular," responding to life-changing events by returning to the bench.[6]

When asked about sustainability within the field of metalsmithing, I have often reflected that we engage in a type of mining—of the scrap pile, of the themes and ideas that have brought us to these middle years, the techniques embedded in the muscle memory of our hands, the ways in which we pick ourselves back up after a life-altering event, the books we return to, the embers from an exhibition that become fire for the next, the experiences that shape the themes and ideas in our work, as well as the bodies that make them. We say yes to fewer things because we know there is less time stretching out in front of us. We ask ourselves: How do we begin again? And to what (and to whom?) will we dedicate these hands?

1 My choice of the word "topography" comes from David Brooks's 2019 book *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (New York: Random House) where he differentiates between the first mountain, the terrain of the ego; and the second mountain, the terrain of the community and a spiritual life. / **2** Marcia Macdonald died of cancer in 2010. She was a beloved member of the metals community who wrote about her illness in a note accompanying her donation to Penland's annual benefit auction: "The past year has presented me with some serious health issues. This has affected me on so many levels, how could it not also affect my work? Cherishing every moment, trying not to sweat the small stuff, simplifying my life, and doing exactly what I need and want to be doing at any given time are my current goals." / **3** http://www.reset-stretch.com. / **4** Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," in *Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 21. / **5** Tavern successfully underwent radiation treatment to shrink her tumor in late 2021. / **6** Krista Tippet, "Taking a Long View of Time, and Becoming 'Critical Yeast,'" October 27, 2022, episode 1,084 of *On Being*, https://onbeing.org/programs/taking-a-long-view-of-time-and-becoming-critical-yeast/#transcript. Tippet engages in a conversation about *chronos* and *kairos* expanded upon by Joanne Paul, "The use of *Kairos* in Renaissance Political Philosophy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 43–78, https://doi.org/10.1086/676152.

Sharon Church in her studio, 2012.

Photo: Jared Castaldi

SHARON CHURCH: 1948–2022

Jewelry artist and educator Sharon Church was a longtime SNAG member, former SNAG board member, and the 2018 recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. She served on *Metalsmith*'s Editorial Advisory Committee under Editor Emerita Suzanne Ramljak.

In lieu of recounting Sharon's biography and her long list of achievements (which are readily found in the many moving tributes put forth after her passing), *Metalsmith* invited personal remembrances from her community. These are but a few among many, the rest of which can be found on our website along with a high-resolution scan of Marjorie Simon's 1999 feature "The Articulation of Desire: The Jewelry of Sharon Church," in *Metalsmith* vol. 19, no. 1.

JAN YAGER

Sharon Church encapsulated graciousness and resilience. She was a rare combination of artist, educator, goldsmith jeweler, wood carver, and assembler of beauty. Her keen observations of nature, and its proof of life, death, and survival, inspired her to create expressions of the depth of her own joys and sorrows. All were all so personal, and so masterfully executed, that upon inception they spoke to a universality. Sharon Church's exquisite artwork will now inspire makers, wearers, givers, and keepers of jewelry for generations to come.

TESSA KENNEDY

Sharon taught in a way I've never known anyone else to teach. She taught the religion of metal. Of being a maker. It was important for her to be known as a jeweler. She valued the "Big Melt." All metal contains all the metal of the past. All metal is ancient, centuries of reimagining. Working it connects us to our history. Students of Sharon's are connected like children who were raised in the same cult. She was pure grace, magic, and commitment. She taught us that making was a spiritual practice. She gave a lot of herself to us and expected a lot in return.

ROD McCORMICK

After thirty-odd years of teaching together, more than anyone else, I got to observe and share her life as a professor, so I can speak to that. As an educator, Sharon brought the same kind of passion to her teaching and service to the University as she brought to her own studio work. We carpooled together for years, and endured the geological passage of time during faculty meetings and committee sessions. We dug our hands into the administrative offal and detritus that go into the making of the academic sausage. We loved it when we could actually teach, when we could be in our studio classroom. As Sharon wrote, "We all celebrate that moment when a student reaches beyond what he or she has been taught and leaps into the unknown." Her teaching was as creative and influential as her art work, and each endeavor informed the other.

One of the things that made Sharon a great teacher was her thoroughness and the level of detail she brought to her demonstrations and interactions with students. She made students take responsibility for their work. She was persistent. She was able to bring them along and entice them into sharing her passion and her high standards.

Any chore could inspire Sharon. Once, in need of a last-minute recruiting brochure, her solution was to hire a photographer and drag an anvil down to the traffic island in the middle of Broad Street. The resulting photos of a hair-blowing-in-the-wind, hammer-wielding student perfectly communicated the excitement of studying art in an urban environment. And the shoot must have amused a steady stream of startled motorists.

BARBARA MAIL

Raised as a debutante, Sharon rebelled and chose to live the life of an artist and a teacher, and she was amazingly skilled at both. With her quiet but engaging manner, she could make family, friends, visiting artists, students, and even strangers feel appreciated, and very special. On any visit to Sharon's home, I was greeted with an open bottle of seltzer because she remembered I drank it warm and flat. She took the job of hostess seriously. Usually that meant a spiral ham, a platter of deviled eggs, and cloth napkins.

On our last visit in mid-October, my husband, Rod McCormick, and I brought a birthday cake from a favorite bakery of hers, to mark her seventy-fourth birthday. I reminded Sharon of a time when she was taking care of our younger daughter, Sonya, who was not quite two years old at the time. Sonya must have been quite smitten with Sharon's beautiful leopard-patterned ballet flats, because she set out to copy Sharon's style. She got hold of a blue pencil and began embellishing her navy and white saddle shoes as best she could. When we came to pick her up, Sharon was so apologetic that she did not see this happening in time to stop

it. But we thought the whole thing was wonderful and have kept those baby shoes all these years because this incident marked the start of Sonya's creative life, and Sharon was there to witness it. Sixteen years later, Sonya started college just as Sharon was preparing to retire. How fortunate that Sonya was able to take a few jewelry classes with Sharon during her last year of teaching.

After about forty-five minutes of visiting and, much of the time, holding Sharon's hand, her wonderful, attentive caregiver asked her if she was getting tired and needed to rest, or wanted something to eat. To our surprise, Sharon asked for some French toast. We went downstairs and prepared a few slices with maple syrup, then cut them into bite-sized pieces. We fed her a few pieces and she seemed to enjoy it. But what I actually witnessed was that gracious hostess, hidden inside a failing body, still caring for her guests, and making them feel welcome and appreciated, until the very end.

TRICIA KURSEWICZ SMITH

Sharon Church was and will always be my gold standard for jewelry-making and instruction. As many have said in remembrance she was grace incarnate. Propriety, a knowing twinkle in her eye, kindness, and intellect all wrapped up in a calm unflappable package. Being formidable without acrimony, and without question a person of solid integrity. For thirty years I have measured my craft against her expectations. Though I had other professors and teachers in the world of metalsmithing, her tutelage and standards remain the measure by which I judge my own excellence—or forgive myself for being unable to meet an expectation.

ERIKA JORJORIAN

One of our first projects as a jewelry major at the University of the Arts during the early 2000s was to make a charm bracelet using the traditional soldered jump ring method. I remember spending all weekend in the studio trying to perfect each link.... Sharon quietly looked at my piece later and said to me, "This is not great, so you'll make it again." Sharon was tough, but honest, and very much like a mother during that time, bestowing confidence in each of her students to keep going when the days were long or a piece didn't turn out as expected. I would not be the jeweler I am today if it wasn't for her. Over twenty years later I still "make it again" because of Sharon, and still very much enjoy the simplicity of a well-made soldered ring jump in a piece of jewelry.

JUDITH SCHAECHTER

Sharon was my best friend and colleague for many years. Her loss is so vast and unmeasurable that it feels utterly pitiful to try to express it in words. I loved her and was loved by her and, for that, my world was an infinitely better place to be.

Sharon was the best teacher I ever met, and I really, truly loved teaching with her. I know that I learned as much as any student, maybe more. I still think, "What would Sharon do?" on regular basis. As a teacher, she was passionate about education and uncompromising in her ability to deeply care for the students' progress, all the while prioritizing art and craft. She taught me that teaching involved risk—because truly caring would inevitably pit encouragement and challenge against each other. But she was really good at balancing the two. She showed me that one can be constructive and supportive without lowering standards or enabling underachieving.

MAEGAN CROWLEY

I met Sharon during my interview as a hopeful transfer student into the Metalsmithing program at University of the Arts in 1993. As I sat nervously across the desk from her I immediately noticed her earrings and thought to myself, "I want to learn to be able to make earrings like that." Her warm personality, smile, and sense of humor lifted my tension throughout the rest of the interview. I was accepted into the program, and Sharon became my mentor. I will always lovingly refer to her as my "Metal Mom." I know I am not alone, as she possessed a rare ability to nurture and inspire all of her students—even the most stubborn and independent such as myself. All of her students share the benefit of truly understanding form, technique, impeccable craftsmanship, and the dedication it takes to achieve them. "Slow is fast" still goes through my mind as I approach new projects to this day.

She continued to teach [me] long after she fulfilled her obligation as my professor; she showed me how to shape a professional career as a metalsmith. As I got older and had a child of my own, Sharon continued to guide me as a new and uncertain mother. One of the greatest lessons I gained from Sharon was not in the studio, it was a life lesson proven by example; Sharon confirmed throughout her life that it was possible to be an amazing mother and maintain a successful career. My heart is heavy, as are the hearts of all who knew and loved Sharon; we can all take comfort in knowing that she leaves behind a legacy that will live forever.

Sharon Church
Her Cultivar (brooch), 2015–2016
Dyed and painted Castello boxwood, diamonds, oxidized sterling silver, Behlen's lacquer, wax, nickel silver findings
111 x 98 x 25 mm
Photo: Ken Yanoviak

"THINGS FALL APART"

BY JILLIAN MOORE

ARTISTS WHO LIVE ON THEIR ART must walk a thin line online: we want to connect with our audience, but—except for the occasional comical post about a fail that conveniently humanizes us to our readers—our constructed personas can never stray too far into harsh reality lest we alienate the audience we depend on. Failure is taboo in social media because, frankly, failure is taboo in the art world.

"Fake it 'til you make it" is a quasi-ironic mantra for working artists. The die-hard collectors will stand by you during the rough times, but the larger and more fickle public—made up of sometime-collectors as well as peers—requires tending in order to keep the money coming in and the studio lights on. Taking a risk posting about a moment of frustration is often met with finger-wagging and toxic positivity, so many artists maintain a constant online enthusiasm that I find exhausting. In the past I attempted to feed that beast by staying perpetually busy and chasing the idea of eventually "making it." But when you set out to intentionally become the object of parasocial relationships it's easy to lose your way. I found myself burned out, constantly ill, and always desperately broke—with the kicker that I didn't feel able to speak about it publicly.

An assortment of pearl-inspired pieces under the spring mayapples, when an upcoming summer Schmuck seemed inevitable.

Jillian Moore
Pearlies (various pieces), 2022
Resin, pigment, steel
Various dimensions
Photo courtesy of the artist

I'm trying to take better care of myself now. I'm attempting to maintain the boundary between where the persona ends and where I begin. The online version of me is a public performance of my practice, an attempt to demystify the idea of a living artist and inspire my particular audience to buy my work. The trick is to harness the power of hustle culture without internalizing the impostor syndrome that comes with it. So I've allowed myself flourishes of brutal honesty just to push back against the pressure to maintain an unachievable permanent upswing. I hope we can all stand tall in moments of honest vulnerability. Life is hard enough as it is.

To be a professional artist is to continually nudge projects along a timeline in the hope of amassing candidates for that last spree of social media posts to broadcast what looks like success. The truth is that things need to simmer before they're ready. Planning and executing an international exhibition takes me six to twelve months: including the many video calls with collaborators, plotting the logistics of transit and lodging, and the obsessive attention to keeping it all as inexpensive as possible; and the even more intense months of promoting the project while simultaneously finishing the work, doing inventory, and packing maniacally. Posting online during this last phase means that, if everything falls apart, it's incredibly public and incredibly embarrassing.

In the summer of 2022 a project failed so spectacularly it upended me. I wanted to dig the deepest hole and hide at the bottom. While that option remains tempting, I've decided it might be useful to burst my own little shame-bubble in the hope it will help all of us be a little more open about these moments of implosion.

I had spent the previous year plotting a triumphant return to Munich Jewellery Week following the upheavals of COVID-19, which ended my travel plans in March of 2020. I had been days from getting on an airplane to Munich when the pandemic put an end to all that. I was so excited for my second showing there, hoping to best the previous year's success (a modest profit!) that I was calculating the risk of quarantine against the financial losses of a cancellation—willing to risk my well-being to keep the show on the road. Fortunately, I let myself be talked out of traveling into that first wave of lockdowns.

My work is not for all markets—bright colors, suggestive shapes, and no traditional techniques or precious materials to speak of. I am, at best, an acquired taste for the craft show market in the States. Here, I consider a show successful if I break even on expenses and add a few more members to my fan club. So I had become dependent on projects in Europe, where I have a greater chance of finding a receptive audience for my strange babies—but then the phase of expanding that ground to a sudden halt. When the pandemic canceled all of our shows the

A red ring creeping around the compost heap.

Jillian Moore
Red Branch Ring, 2021
Resin, acrylic, paint, polymer clay, brass
35 x 65 x 30 mm
Photo courtesy of the artist

art-buying crowd offered an initial wave of enthusiastic support, but as COVID dragged on online sales dried up. People need to be able to try on jewelry to fall in love with it.

My next exhibition, *Polyphonous 2022: whispers & cries*, was to be part of an ongoing international collective that I'd worked with back in 2019. Even better, this particular show would be in Studio Gabi Green. Gallery space is a rare commodity at this event, and I would be splitting it with my good friend and fellow jewelry-maker Rachel Darbourne. We were sure this was going to be an especially good iteration for us, and we both needed that.

Unfortunately, and this is the short version, my unexpired passport wasn't sufficient for travel; my passport needed to be more than three months from its expiration date by the time I'd be *leaving* Europe. Given the backlog of requests, not a single passport office in the country could update my passport in time. I would not make it to Munich in 2022.

Instead, I scrambled to recoup expenses and reduce financial loss. And since I didn't want to leave my coexhibitor with a half-empty gallery, or leave our collective shorthanded when everyone's success is interdependent, I needed to find a way for my work to travel without me.

A brooch on the spring moss, part of a promotional photoshoot for the intended exhibition.

Jillian Moore
Gold Branch Brooch, 2020
Resin, polymer clay, pigment, microbeads, nickel-silver
80 x 40 x 12 mm
Photo courtesy of the artist

While clambering to pack up nearly fifty pieces in less than a day, I desperately weighed my options. But even the most exorbitant express shipping was no match for the fact that the pandemic had slowed the globe to a crawl, with European customs in tow. Having recently experienced a package disappearing into Belgian customs for over a month, I knew my work could disappear into the customs void. This option was not an option.

Moving on to my fourth or fifth contingency plan, I found a friend who knew someone flying to Munich for Jewellery Week, and this lovely person agreed to deliver my work for me. Elated, after overnighting my babies to them I strategized how to post about this farce while leveraging it to promote the show and guzzle the lemonade made from these lemons. Then my volunteer courier came down with COVID. My work did not make it to Munich in 2022.

I'm still trying to reckon with this failure, especially the fact that it harmed my collaborators. I don't believe in curses. But I do seem to have the inversion of "magical thinking," or what is more commonly called "anxiety." I've done my best to outrun these feelings by staying busy, and maybe that's why the internet grind has fit me so comfortably.

But I also need to reckon with the fact that striving for perfection is as fruitless as it is agonizing. I've done exhibitions with a twisted ankle so bad the pain had me seeing sparks. And to share the full truth of that last triumphant show in Munich: I had pneumonia for the entire show, and on my return I was bedridden for the better part of a month. This body has run out of hustle.

That first wave of lockdown in the spring of 2020 cost all of us a year's worth of projects, exhibitions, and workshops. Self-employed artists were mostly unaided by the protections that buoyed small businesses. Running a studio, even from home, still costs money when the money stops coming in. At this time of writing, artists aren't yet back to normal because we burned through whatever small buffer we had. Shows are picking up, but everything costs more, and people aren't buying the way they did. I am chagrined to reveal that I think back fondly at those first few months of lockdown, when I suddenly felt free to lament online and plainly ask for help.

If we can all be more transparent about how often things fall apart, maybe we can make the triumphs as precious as they deserve to be. I wish I'd learned earlier to accept that a lot isn't within my control. I'd like emerging artists to feel less pressured to burn themselves out. I'd like us to give ourselves permission to ask for comfort from our community, especially when things fall apart. I'm going to try. I'm inviting you to join me.

HAPPENINGS

Announcement

Right:
Harold B. "Bill" Helwig
Untitled, 1975
Enamel, copper
12 x 12 x 2 in.
Courtesy of Cullen Hackler
Photo courtesy of the Metal Museum

Iran, *Ewer*, 607–608
Brass; cast, engraved, and inlaid with black compound
Photo courtesy of the Hossein Afshar Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

MFAH Opens New Galleries for Art of the Islamic Worlds

3.5.2023
The Museum of Fine Arts
Houston, TX

These new galleries present for the first time the full extent of MFAH holdings in Islamic art in the context of an extensive selection of Iranian masterworks on long-term loan from the Afshar Collection. Carefully assembled over the past fifty years, the collection conveys the rich artistic traditions of Iranian civilization from the seventh to nineteenth centuries in several hundred exquisite paintings, significant ceramics, precious inlaid metal ware, and finely woven silk fabrics and carpets. These objects reflect the breadth of historic Islamic lands, including present-day Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan.
emuseum.mfah.org/groups/art-islamic-worlds
@mfahouston

Exhibitions

Creative Alloys: The Boston Metals Scene

1.28.2023 – 6.4.2023
Fuller Craft Museum
Brockton, MA

Creative Alloys: The Boston Metals Scene spotlights the vibrant metalsmithing and jewelry community that has ignited Boston over the past five decades. Participating artists include Jamie Bennett, Charles Crowley, Cynthia Eid, Sandra Enterline, Linda Kindler-Priest, Rena Koopman, Deborah Krupenia, Claire Sanford, Sondra Sherman, Jill Sloburg-Ackerman, Munya Upin, Heather White, and Joe Wood.
fullercraft.org/event/creative-alloys-the-boston-metals-scene
@fullercraft

Extending the Potential: The Art and Techniques of Bill Helwig

1.29.2023 – 5.21.2023
Metal Museum
Nashville, TN

Harold B. "Bill" Helwig taught himself the art of enameling using trial and error, and experimenting with enamel would become a lifelong passion for Helwig. Throughout his life, he was active in the craft field. He taught classes and workshops, cofou nded *Glass on Metal* magazine, served on the board of the Enamelist Society, and was an enthusiastic member of the American Craft Council. A tribute to both Helwig's art and his passion for experimentation, this exhibit explores the breadth and mastery of his techniques while detailing the processes behind the art. Pieces from private collections and the Helwig estate are featured alongside contemporary artists utilizing the same techniques, revealing the vast potential of enamel arts.
metalmuseum.org/extendingpotential
@metalmuseum

Vignettes: Concentrated Views of RAM's Collection

2.1.2023 – 8.19.2023
Racine Art Museum (RAM)
Racine, WI

Vignettes showcases groupings of work connected by themes and ideas inspired by the museum's history or collection—referencing past exhibitions, time periods, favored pieces, or ideas donors explored. Celebrating RAM's twentieth anniversary

and featuring textiles, art to wear, art jewelry, photography, prints, ceramics, and more, this atypical presentation highlights the range of the permanent collection in its variability of artist voices and backgrounds as well as types of media.
ramart.org/exhibit/vignettes-concentrated-views
@racineartmuseum

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Restrung: Contemporary Beadsmiths

2.16.2023 – 3.23.2023
Parachute Gallery
Tampa, FL

Beadwork has a reputation in the world of contemporary jewelry and art as being crafty, unsophisticated, and easy to replicate. In *Metalsmith* vol. 41, no. 1, curator and gallery director Jessica Todd debunked this inaccurate view as being deeply rooted in colonialism, racism, classism, and sexism—given that hierarchies of material and process reflect an intentional rejection of the domestic, the ritualistic, and the arts of colonized people in order to establish social dominance. She returns with *Restrung: Contemporary Beadsmiths*—a physical manifestation of her research and a visually decadent installation of conceptual beadwork made by North American artists from a range of disciplines and backgrounds. This exhibition thus celebrates as much as it elevates.
parachute-gallery.com/exhibitions/restrung
@parachute.gallery

Daniel Jocz
Banana Face (brooch), 1997
Fruit Faces series
Silver, enamel, amethyst
Photo courtesy of Daniel Jocz Studio

Media

The Art & Times of Daniel Jocz

Book

Published by Arnoldsche, *The Art & Times of Daniel Jocz* presents the entrancing, challenging, sometimes beautiful, and always clever work of American jewelry artist and sculptor Daniel Jocz. This book takes an in-depth look at the twists and turns of Jocz's long career, from his early geometric sculptures to the fashion-forward flocked "Candy Wear" collection, and from his ruminations on Marlene Dietrich in the form of necklaces featuring enamel smoked cigarettes to the wall reliefs he explores today. It also considers Jocz's place in the avant-garde through the lens of fashion and culture and explores his involvement in the rollicking Boston jewelry scene of the late twentieth century.
arnoldsche.com/en/product/the-art-times-of-daniel-jocz
@arnoldsche_art_publishers

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Beauty Over Time

Book
Patina Gallery
Santa Fe, NM

Beauty Over Time is an extension of the Patina Gallery's mission to sustain the souls and lives of its artists, friends, and patrons with soul-stirring beauty. Seven years in the making, this compilation contains 152 pages of visually stunning imagery featuring the skilled and talented artists who have exhibited their collections at Patina Gallery over the last twenty-three years.
patina-gallery.com/collections/book
@patinagallery

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Esther Brinkmann

Book

The work of Swiss artist Esther Brinkmann is characterized by the meaning she bestows on the ring and its relationship to both the hand and (perhaps surprisingly) its case. Brinkmann prefers processed and textured materials, which now also include new component forms, techniques, and substances from her time living in China and India. This Arnoldsche publication presents Esther Brinkman's oeuvre from the past thirty years and highlights for the first time the remarkable strength and the freedom that distinguish the artist's rich career.
arnoldsche.com/en/product/esther-brinkmann
@arnoldsche_art_publishers

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William Underhill: Casting a Legacy

Book

William Underhill (1933–2022) was one of the great talents and enigmas of the modern American studio craft movement. He became an acclaimed master of lost-wax casting, pursuing the sculptural potential of bronze vessels with unrivaled persistence and virtuosity. He "molded and scratched the wax until the final bronze surface embodied all of the mystical connotations of a ritualistic object," said Lee Nordness in his groundbreaking Objects USA (1969) survey of modern studio crafts. Published by Arnoldsche.
arnoldsche.com/en/product/william-underhill
@arnoldsche_art_publishers

Esther Brinkmann
Eclipse (pendant), 2000
Hammered gold, cotton string
35 x 43 mm
Image courtesy of Arnoldsche

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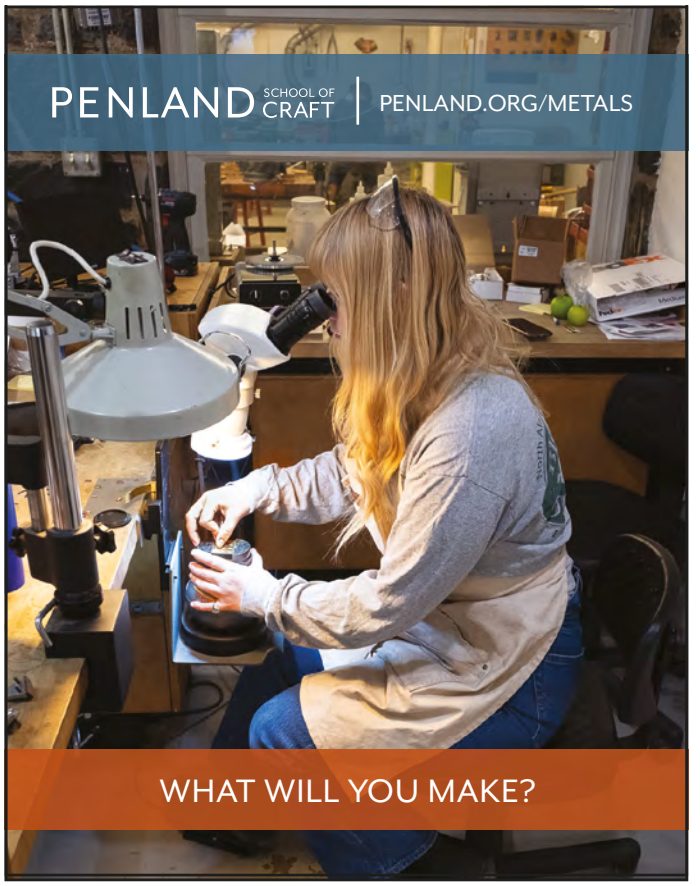
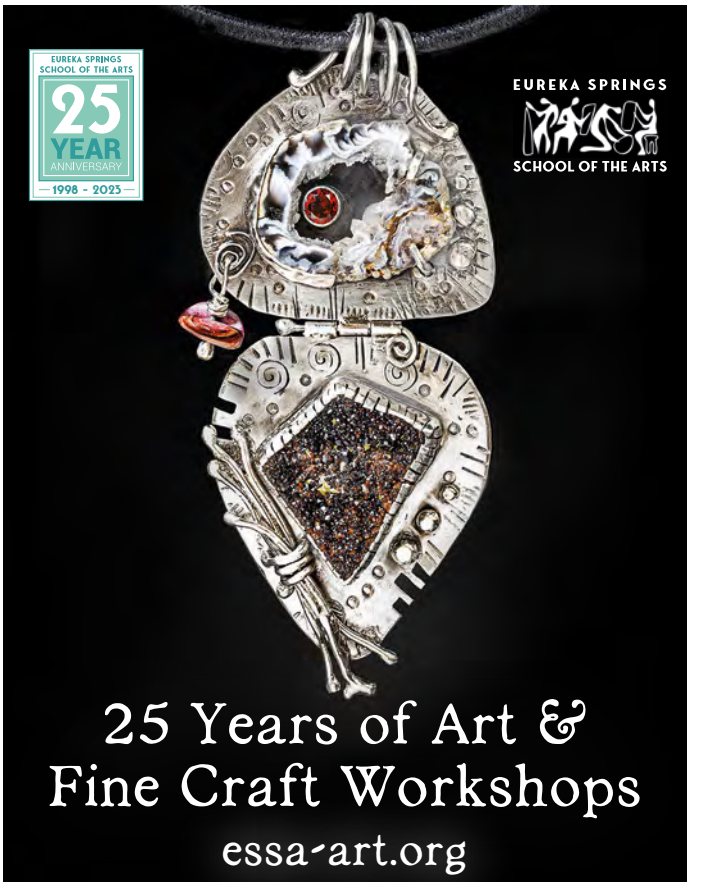
Undisciplined Podcast Launches

Expanding on the notions of traditional making, this podcast series documents bold and curious transdisciplinary art/craft practices. In each episode, *Undisciplined* invites a surprise guest to take over the role of the host, who then chooses a counterpart to have the dialogue with—a friend or a foe, a collaborator or an opponent. This podcast is developed in collaboration with Amsterdam-based contemporary jewelry magazine *Current Obsession*.
undisciplinedpodcast.com
@undisciplinedpodcast





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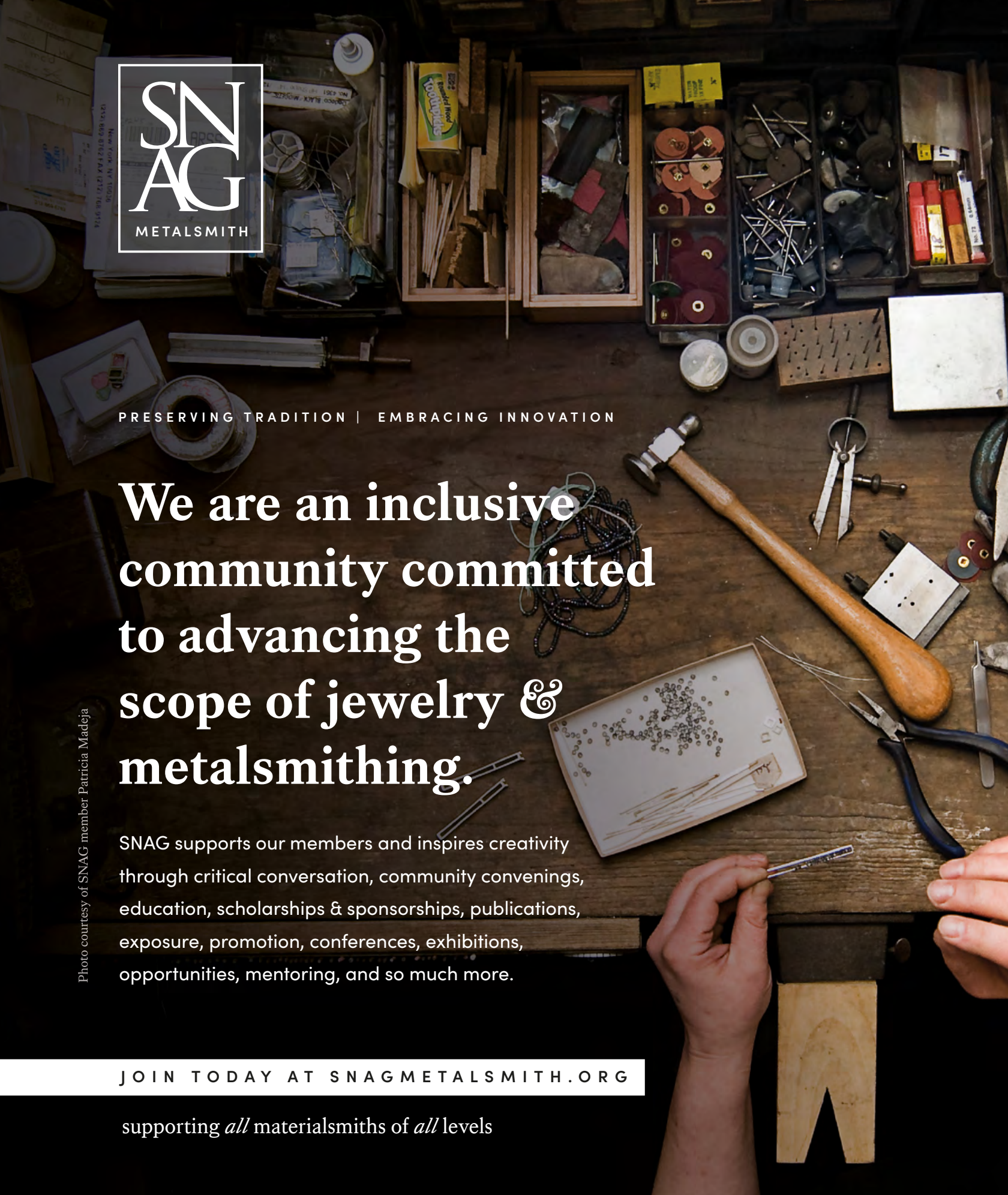
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